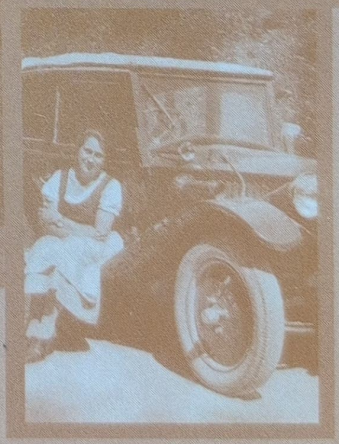
Bitter Prerequisites

A Faculty for Survival from Nazi Terror



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Captured in time by the Third Reich, tormented by memories of the Holocaust, a group of survivors, now members of a university community, detail their compelling story in *Bitter Prerequisites.*

The twelve, fractured by society and religion, recall their coming of age in the Old World in which they had been denounced as enemies of the Reich. As children, they faced the taunts and brutality of their classmates. As young adults, they foresaw few job prospects and endured broken engagements. The simple fact was that they were not wanted and faced a sure death.

They fled using any and all means. One of the twelve took a train traversing all of Russia and then boarded a boat bound for the West Coast. Others, forced to stay, relied on borrowed identities, the kindness of non-Jewish friends, or sheer luck. Still these twelve individuals do not consider themselves extraordinary people—neither martyrs nor saints, but simply survivors.

As the twelve faced a new world and new lives, they were forced to redefine community, family, and nationality.

continued on back flap

FOR SHEILA

who inspired this book

AND

FOR STÉPHANIE AND E.J.

whose occupation with human rights reinforces its purpose

The human spirit can prevail as long as there are those who struggle against injustice and intolerance, as long as there are those who search for excellence and beauty, and as long as there are two people who will hold each other's hand in the darkness of the night.

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Introduction

People do not die; they are always there, somewhere in the past. But the journeys of the past do not come alive by themselves. They have to be recreated. The biographies in this book are journeys of a special kind. They are not the kind found on the Grand Tour or in literature, like the kind spoken about by Shelley in his poem about the traveler from an antique land.

These survivors of Hitler's war against the Jews can speak about past civilizations and broken monuments, but they did not move from place to place to collect vignettes to enrich and entertain others. They hoped merely to survive and find a new way of life and identity, and they had no expectation of returning home at all.

Wherever possible, their parents tried to shield them from the trauma of rejection and exile. To the degree they succeeded, their children could board ship at Hamburg or Rotterdam more with a spirit of anticipation than rejection, feeling that they were beginning a great adventure, looking forward to a new home and new friends because their father had changed jobs or because they could now fulfill some childhood fantasy.

> I had always wanted to go to America, it was my dream. I had read Karl May and I wanted to be a cowboy. Going there would be pretty much of a lark and now I could see that I was going to get my wish.[1]

But this was hardly typical. Most of the émigrés, certainly old enough not

to be fooled, were surrounded with anxiety. They knew they were headed for an uncertain future. Moreover, without any schedules or itineraries, they realized they faced a long journey. One came to New York from Munich via Ljubljana, Belgrade, Zagreb, Paris, and Le Havre. Another came to New York from Vienna via Trieste, Palermo, Rome, Paris, Nantes, La Rochelle, Luchon, Marseilles, and Trinidad. Another arrived in San Francisco via Berlin, Moscow, Pusan (Korea), Kobe (Japan), and Yokahama. Others were unable to escape from Europe at all. They survived through hiding and subterfuge or endured the camps.

These refugees came from a wide variety of backgrounds and from cities spread across Europe: from Frankfurt-am-Main, Stuttgart, Ronnenberg, Würzburg, Kassel, and Villingen in Germany; from Vienna in Austria; from Warsaw and Stanislau in Poland; and from Munkács and Rimvaska Sobota in Czechoslovakia, towns which later became part of Hungary. One was an American, a prisoner of war from New York City, who was sent to a concentration camp. They spanned more than a generation and made careers in a broad range of disciplines: political science, physics, foreign languages and literature, chemical engineering, mathematics, sociology, industrial engineering, and biological sciences. The Nazi racial policy touched them all directly, all differently yet similarly, and with a certain chronological predictability. It first affected those from Germany, then Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary.

Devoid of any of the fundamental considerations of morality upon which modern states base their law, Hitler's war against the Jews was evolutionary and expansive, and its fury took many by surprise. To them, the kind of violent antisemitism that had frequently marked European society before Hitler came to power seemed a thing of the past. This assumption was particularly strong in Germany, where ever since the constitutional guarantees of 1871, the Jews had enjoyed complete civil, political, and religious rights.[2]

German Jews had actively promoted the vital interests of their homeland and contributed mightily to its science, industry, and culture. Discrimination had not disappeared. In the civil service, for example, Jews found it difficult to climb into the upper ranks despite qualifications and constitutional guarantees; and few managed to obtain university professorships or army commissions. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, all major German political parties had eliminated antisemitism from their platforms, and as time went on, other barriers were dropping.[3] In 1914, Jewish young men had enthusiastically rushed to defend the *Heimatland,* their numbers greater than any other group's, and they served overwhelmingly in front-line units.

Foreign Jews, particularly those in Eastern Europe, regarded the Reich as a haven of tolerance and opportunity, a kind of Promised Land. And even though their presence was not always welcomed, many immigrated there. Of course, it did not help that many German Jews considered these immigrants backward and feared that their strong Orthodox beliefs and often Hasidic way of dress might rekindle the fires of antisemitism. As a result they usually kept to themselves:

> Our Jewish community was divided between the Eastern Jews and the assimilated German Jews, or *jeckes*. . . . The German Jews were the ones who were highly educated. They would go to synagogue in *zilenders* (top hats), which now only chimney sweeps wear. We [of Polish origin] were not really assimilated into this assimilated group.[4]

These *Ostjuden* had little chance of ever receiving German citizenship, no matter how great their degree of assimilation. They could live in Germany as foreigners, but most of them and their descendants would remain officially aliens.

By contrast, the *Deutschjuden* had it made. The 1913 nationality law recognized their citizenship by blood—*jus sanguinis,* a right that was theirs even should they leave the country and settle elsewhere. The law stated that unless *Auslandsdeutsche* took out citizenship in another country or refused to perform military service, they could always be citizens of the Reich, and so could their descendants.[5]

Nazi racial legislation was a radical departure from these guaranties. Adolf Hitler saw history not as a progressive movement of liberation and tolerance but as a contest between the organic and inorganic forces of nature. In this gigantic struggle, the Teutonic peoples, bound in a powerful synthesis of blood and soil, would defeat the forces of racial pollution and prepare the way for the salvation of civilization. They thus would prove themselves worthy of Hitler, their leader, whose right to command was given him by God:

> I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jews, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.[6]

The Nazi Party program, drawn up in February 1920, ruled that only those of German blood could be members of the nation! By this it meant that no Jew could be a German. Hitler claimed he had arrived at this belief during his down-and-out days in Vienna before the First World War.

> Once, as I was strolling through the Inner city, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought.

> For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in [my boyhood town of] Linz. I observed the man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this foreign face, scrutinizing feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form.
>
> Is this a German?[7]

The one enduring, commanding facet of Hitler's character was his hatred of the Jews, whom he blamed for all the evils with which he thought Germany was currently afflicted: pornography, prostitution, treason, incest, Marxism, cultural decadence, disease, economic exploitation, and the collapse of social values. But most Germans were not that extreme. Those who initially supported him did so more for the Nazi program of economic recovery and positive sense of nationalism than for obsessive antisemitism. Hitler's racism seemed more at home in the Viennese gutter than in the Reich. And many German Jews, because of their strong patriotism and identification with German culture, found it difficult to view such hatemongering as anything more than a product of the political lunatic fringe:

> We were respected members of the community . . . and involved in the community's philanthropic and artistic activities. The National Socialist period was, therefore, a total and complete turnaround.[8]

Besides, until 1932, Hitler was not even a German citizen.[9]

However, German democracy always carried with it the taint of bastardy. The Weimar Republic had been born into a cruel world, and on June 28, the day of its establishment in 1919, Germans hung black bunting from their houses and public buildings. Thus, Weimar did not mark its existence with an official holiday. The Germans saved their parades and fireworks to honor an earlier event: January 18, 1871, the day Bismarck had founded the Second Reich.

Most of the center and right-wing German political parties favored the restoration of German territory lost at Paris in 1919, and they vigorously opposed paying reparations. Many of these groups were also outspokenly antidemocratic. The cohesion of the old German middle class began to collapse into extremism, antisemitism, and *völkisch* nationalism. A series of fragile coalitions, which ran the Weimar government, no longer seemed to give dynamic focus to the nation's political life. Patriotic paramilitary groups, youth movements, and league-type organizations, many of which were preoccupied with the concept of a "new" awakening and the solution of problems through authoritarianism, rose to prominence.[10]

Many Germans saw the great drama of the modern age not in the power of the individual over the government, but in the intensification of the power of the government over the individual. The constant squabbling among more than thirty political parties undermined stable government and prompted a longing for the security of the good old days. Increasingly, the German electorate turned to leaders with easy solutions to pressing problems.

Yet, not until the Great Depression of the early thirties did a majority of Germans vote for parties that opposed democracy. The Nazi Party, which had become the largest party in the Reichstag in the elections of 1930, drew support from a wide section of the electorate, especially in southern Germany, among the lower and lower-middle classes, and members of the professional and middle classes, the civil service, and traditional ruling elites. Many nationalists came to regard Hitler as the true heir of Frederick the Great and Otto von Bismarck. And women saw him as the protector of family values, even though he advocated their disenfranchisement. In the 1932 presidential elections, Hitler kept Paul von Hindenburg from winning on the first round. His impressive showing against that venerable war hero helped catapult him to the chancellorship the following year.

Hitler successfully synthesized capitalism and socialism, the two great movements of modern times, making it appear he was acting above classes for the welfare of all citizens and the nation. His idea of service was expressed in the *Führerprinzip,* the duty of all Germans to submit without question to his will, an article of faith his subordinates enthusiastically propagated.

> You are Germany. When you act, the nation acts; when you judge, the people judge. Our gratitude to you will be our pledge to stand by you for better and for worse, come what may! Thanks to your leadership, Germany will attain her aim to be the homeland of all Germans of the world. You have guaranteed our victory, and you are now guaranteeing our peace.[11]

Yet despite its pretensions of solidarity and unity, the Nazi government itself was a profusion of fiefdoms, confusing jurisdictions, and fierce bureaucratic competitiveness. Hitler preferred a divide-and-conquer style of leadership, as long as it was understood he was in overall charge. He was constantly on guard against anyone who might dare challenge his right to determine who should live and who should die.

Shortly after he became chancellor, Hitler began his campaign against the Jews with a boycott of Jewish businesses and offices. But other than appointing a central boycott directorate, he had yet to establish the agencies to direct Jewish

policy. Moreover, what it meant to be Jewish had yet to be defined. While the necessary legislation was being prepared, Hitler drummed away at his main theme: the Jews had to be excluded from German society. He hoped to make it so uncomfortable for them that they would all leave Germany "voluntarily." His fear was that other nations might be reluctant to accept the Jews Germany did not want:

> America's own Immigration Laws [have] excluded from admission those belonging to races of which America [disapproves], while America [is] by no means prepared to open the gates to Jewish "fugitives" from Germany.[12]

And:

> In England people assert that their arms are open to welcome all the oppressed, especially the Jews who have left Germany. . . . But it would be still finer if England did not make her grand gesture dependent on the possession of £1000—if England should say: Anyone can enter—as we unfortunately have done for thirty or forty years. If we too had declared that no one could enter Germany save under condition of bringing with him £1000 or paying more, then today we should have no Jewish question at all.[13]

The German people were willing to accept, even support, Hitler's campaign against the Jews, provided it was carried out as "legal" policy. Such legitimization began in 1935 with a redefinition of German citizenship. Hitler had received his authority to enact racial legislation from the so-called Enabling Law, or *Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich* (The Law for Removing the Distress of People and Reich), which the members of the Reichstag had passed on March 23, 1933, by the necessary two-thirds majority. In giving him the power to rule by decree, the Reichstag provided the constitutional basis for Hitler's entire regime.

Although Hitler now possessed the authority to exercise legislative, executive, and judicial power as he wished, the Weimar Republic technically, and necessarily, continued to exist. The Enabling Law did not give Hitler the authority to abolish the Weimar regime. And now there was no real need to do so. But to maintain the illusion that actions were constitutional, Hitler dutifully had his powers under the enabling legislation extended every four years, just before their official expiration. The last time his rubber-stamp Reichstag participated in this bizarre ceremony was one month before the end of World War II. Ironically, the exercise of arbitrary power, which the Germans had feared would come from Storm Trooper hooliganism, was now in the hands of one man constituting his own *Rechtstaat*.

The new Reich Citizenship Law, made public at the Nazi Party Rally at Nürnberg on September 15, 1935, distinguished between an empire citizen (*Reichsbürger*) and a state subject (*Staatsangehöriger*). The first category included a person of "German or kindred blood and who shows, through his conduct that he is both desirous and fit to serve faithfully the German people and the Reich."[14] Only a citizen of the Reich enjoyed full political rights. The second classification included a person who merely belonged "to the protective union of the German Reich."

A second piece of legislation, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, outlawed marriage or sexual intercourse between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood. It also prohibited Jews from employing German female nationals or those of kindred blood in their homes, and it forbade Jews to hoist the national flag or display the colors of the Reich.

The Nürnberg Laws allowed the Jews to remain as members of the state, albeit not full citizens, but at least on paper entitled to state protection. But there still was no law that defined what it meant to be a Jew. This legislation came later with the Reich Citizenship Law of November 14, 1935, with the determination made primarily on religious, rather than racial, grounds.

Article 5

(1) A Jew is anyone who descended from at least three grandparents who were racially full Jews.

(2) A Jew is also one who descended from two full Jewish parents, if:
   (a) he belonged to the Jewish religious community at the time this law was issued, or who joined the community later.
   (b) he was married to a Jewish person, at the time the law was issued, or married one subsequently.
   (c) he is the offspring of a marriage with a Jew in the sense of Section 1, which was contracted after the Law for the protection of German blood and German honor became effective (15 September 1935).
   (d) he is the offspring of an extramarital relationship, with a Jew, according to Section 1, and will be born out of wedlock after July 31, 1936.[15]

Even when it came time to pass to a policy of extermination, the Nazis were always careful to cloak their actions with the outward trappings of legality. Thus before the Final Solution, the Nazis stripped the Jews of their status as

"state subjects" to remove from them any vestiges of official protection that they had been accorded in the Reich Citizenship Law. They did this by classifying all Jews who had taken up residence abroad as officially "stateless," including those who had been deported to concentration camps. Thus, no German subjects were being murdered, only "stateless persons of Jewish descent."[16]

Prior to 1939 it is difficult to find any direct announcement of intent to murder the Jews. However, the entire aim of Hitler's racial policy was eradication of the Jewish presence from Germany one way or another. In his famous speech to the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, he publicly announced his intention to expand this policy to the rest of Europe:

> To-day I will once more be a prophet: If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations of Europe once more into a war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.[17]

The speech was shown on newsreels and had wide distribution. But only in retrospect did its full face value become clear. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had advocated the expansion of the German racial community into the Ukraine and western Russia, a goal of German foreign policy that was hardly traditional and one that could not be attained without plunging the continent into war. In the important meeting he held in the Reich's chancellery on November 5, 1937, he had revealed that "it was his unalterable resolve to solve Germany's problem of space [at] the latest by 1943–45."[18] No one at that meeting, which included the combined chiefs of staff, doubted that the Führer had meant what he said.

Hitler now moved forward with his plans to create a vast new German empire while leaving the execution of his Jewish policy primarily in the hands of Heinrich Himmler, lord of the SS and Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German Nation. Himmler, who was efficient, mystical, and a racial-purity fanatic with no ambition to challenge Hitler's power, was a perfect candidate for the job. He dreamed of creating an SS state out of the old middle kingdom of the Burgundian dukes, where after the war he would rule as an independent sovereign.[19]

Himmler had no trouble finding subordinates who were eager to carry out Hitler's insane schemes. His chief associate, Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the SS security service, although no committed idealogue, could, among other acts of brutality and cruelty, suavely host the Wannsee Conference, where the last phase of the Final Solution was planned. For Heydrich the issue was not race,

but power. Heydrich, according to one of his assistants, was "untouched by any pangs of conscience and assisted by an ice-cold intellect, he could carry injustice to the point of extreme cruelty."[20]

Men such as these helped fashion the political culture, which turned the people of an entire nation into accomplices. Those in positions of authority knew what was expected of them and had no need of signed orders to perform their duties. Hitler had set the course, he had passed the laws, and now it was the people's job to produce. There was never a man in German history so trusted, loved, worshipped, and followed as the Führer.

The brevity of the Boycott period had encouraged many Jews to believe that the Nazi pogrom, like repressions in the past, would eventually spend its fury. Until then, life would be uncomfortable, but not impossible. The Nürnberg Laws changed this, but not just because of what they said. What had by 1935 become clear was the extent to which the Nazi policy of *Gleichschaltung,* or coordination, had succeeded among the German people, often with little apparent prompting from the government. The broad mass of the German people not only accepted what was happening but also seemed to enjoy it and want to join in. The Jews found they could no longer go to their favorite restaurants, take their usual Sunday walks, or send their children to school without fear that they would be beaten up.

The rush of Jews to leave Germany became a torrent. Had other nations been as willing to take them in as they were to leave, most of Germany's Jews would have been saved. However, other countries at the very least wanted assurances that those pounding at their doors to enter would not become wards of the state.

> [My parents] were working on getting an affidavit. But they weren't able to assemble the necessary documentation. It seems that some of their records were lost during the burning and looting that was going on during Kristallnacht. It wasn't as though they wanted to stay in Germany. But, like so many others, they couldn't obtain an affidavit.[21]

As it was, a majority of Germany's roughly half a million Jews had left by 1938, about half of these finding refuge in the United States. Not so fortunate were the Jews of the rest of Europe. Most of those who survived, especially those in this book, did so largely through luck.

Studies that focus on human behavior emphasize the impact of experience on personality. This is especially true of Holocaust studies, the focus of which is on those threatened in their existing way of life. This book is an account of

the experiences of twelve remarkable individuals in the context of the times in which they lived. But more importantly, it is an effort to show how personality, family, culture, experience, and contingency affected religious and cultural identity and contributed to building those values that have determined and influenced their careers in teaching and research.

Notes

1. Walter Hirsch interview.
2. Such emancipation was not new. Sixty years before, the Kingdom of Prussia had already recognized its Jews as full citizens and allowed them to settle where they chose and marry whomever they wanted. Other states in the German Confederation had also eased their restrictions. However, progress was frequently piecemeal and the results ambiguous until German unification settled the matter.
3. Thus Daniel Goldhagen's contention that "in the election of 1893, parties avowedly antisemetic gained a majority in the Reichstag" is inaccurate. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 75.
4. Sol Gartenhaus interview.
5. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 114–25.
6. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), p. 65. The book supposedly sold over twenty thousand copies its first year, but the figure is undoubtedly an exaggeration. When Hitler became Führer, the sales figures soared, second in sales only to the Bible. Hitler became a multimillionaire from the royalties.
7. *Mein Kampf,* p. 56. It is doubtful whether Hitler's antisemitism sprang from this one encounter. Prejudice usually is an evolutionary process developed within a culture that condones intolerance. The most important facet of this personal history is not its Damascus-road aspect, but that Hitler had by then begun to view the Jews as an alien species.
8. Fritz Cohen interview.
9. In 1925 Hitler, fearing that he would be deported to Austria as an undesirable alien, renounced his Austrian citizenship. He therefore became officially *staatslos.* However, having German citizenship was essential to running for public office. On February 25, 1932, three days after he announced his candidacy for the presidency, Hitler took advantage of a loophole in the Reich's citizenship law by having himself appointed a *Regierungsrat* (senior executive officer) in the Brunswick legation in Berlin, a position that naturalized him ipso facto.

10. Wm. Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt, *The Burden of Victory: France, Britain, and the Enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919–1925* (New York: University Press of America, 1995), p. 70.
11. Rudolf Hess, deputy leader of the Nazi Party, opening the Nürnberg Party Rally, September 4, 1934. In *Triumph of the Will,* filmed by Leni Riefenstahl, Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA), released March 1935.
12. Speech to the Doctor's Union, April 1933, in Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler,* 1 (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), pp. 728–29.
13. Speech in Berlin's Sportpalast, October 24, 1933. Ibid., pp. 729–30.
14. *Reichsbürgergesetz* vom 15 Sept 1935, in John Mendelsohn, ed., *The Holocaust: Selected Documents* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 23.
15. John Mendelsohn, ed., *The Holocaust: Selected Documents* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), pp. 31–32.
16. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany,* pp. 167–68. The same legalistic hairsplitting reserved for German Jews was not necessary for the Jews of other countries. The German jurists had already categorized them as alien peoples without rights.
17. Baynes, p. 741.
18. *Documents of German Foreign Policy,* series D, vol. 7, pp. 635–36.
19. Others than Himmler concerned themselves with Jewish policy, such as Hans Frank, head of the Government General, and Alfred Rosenberg, minister for occupied eastern territories. Also involved were officials in the labor, food, and agriculture ministries, the Special Planning Homestead Office, the High Command of the Armed Forces, and the Directorate of the Four-Year Plan. Many were involved at different stages, and all were thirsty to build their careers by playing a role in the decision-making process in the German East.
20. Walter Schellenberg, *Hitler's Secret Service* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 21. Schellenberg was head of the SS foreign intelligence department and Heydrich's direct subordinate. Like his boss, he joined the Nazi Party because it promised the best career oppportunities.
21. Joseph Haberer interview.

GERMANY

March 1939

Annexation of:

Austria (March 1938)

Sudetenland (October 1938)

Occupation of:

Bohemia and Moravia (March 1939)

boy. Also, there were certain things in the German culture that I liked. There were the festivals and the holidays. The bell ringing, the songs, the stories, the fairy tales—not so pleasant, as a matter of fact, because Grimm's fairy tales are pretty grim.

Max and Morris is pretty chilling. Being ground up into sausage must surely be the ultimate revenge against kids.

HABERER: My parents were very German, and I had a very German kind of upbringing. When my mother caught me telling a fib, she told me that famous German saying: *"Wer einmal lügt dem glaubt man nicht / Und wenn er auch die Wahrheit spricht"* (He who lies once is never again believed, even if he tells the truth). She always emphasized cleanliness and punctuality. My picture books contained a certain idealization of courage and patriotism. I was always moved at the singing of "Deutschland über Alles." (Just as later on when I heard the Israeli national anthem sung. On the other hand, "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful" never got to me.)

Did you ever feel that because you were Jewish that somehow you had to constantly be better than everybody else to justify your position in society?

HABERER: No. A lot of the time I was having a pretty awful time. I wanted to be like the others, and it never occurred to me that I had to prove anything. I was just unhappy being what I was. At eight years old, I wasn't thinking about my responsibility or obligation to demonstrate to the Germans that Jews were as good, if not better, than they were. I wasn't conceptualizing in those terms at all.

A Stately Victorian House: Michael Rossmann

"My mother did not think of herself as being Jewish. She, like the other members of her family, was proud to be a German."

A Family Divided

The family of Michael Rossmann's father was non-Jewish; his mother's family, the Schwabachers, was Jewish. Wealthy and prominent, the Schwabachers came from Frankfurt am Main and could trace back their ancestry in the city to before the time of Napoleon.

In 1925, Frankfurt's Jewish population numbered 29,385 people, or 6.3 percent of the city's total population. Yet, despite what might seem like fairly small numbers, this Frankfurt community was second in size only to that of Berlin, with its Jewish population of 172,672. The third-largest was that of Breslau, with 23,240, followed by Hamburg, with 19,794. Since emancipation during the nineteenth century (a process which began with Napoleon's creation of the Confederation of the Rhine in 1806), many of Frankfurt's Jews had become increasingly assimilationist, despite the city's still remaining a strong intellectual citadel of Orthodoxy. The Jewish population, by and large, was becoming more wealthy, cultured, and civic-minded.

By 1842, the number of Orthodox had dwindled to 10 percent of the Jewish population. In that year the Friends of Reform rejected the authority of the Talmud, raised doubts about the necessity for circumcision and observance of dietary laws, and repudiated the Messianic faith and the return to Palestine. They claimed Germany as their Fatherland. In 1904, the Frankfurt Jews celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the famous Philanthropin, a progressive high school that had become the model for Jewish Reform education.

MICHAEL ROSSMANN: My parents divorced when I was about three years old. It had nothing to do with the religious differences, but in my father's family there was a very strange situation, since the family was divided between Nazi and non-Nazi.

His mother, Grandmother Rossmann, was an antisemite and so was my uncle, Bruno Rossmann, who was a committed National Socialist and obviously a member of the Party. In fact, after the [Second World] War, I had to go and see him because my Grandfather Rossmann, who had died during the war, had left all his property to me. My Uncle Bruno had been taking care of it in the meantime and when I was there, he showed me documents signed by Heinrich Himmler thanking him for his services as a biochemist. I really hate to think what that involved. He was quite nice to me, but I just felt uncomfortable to be associated with a guy like that.

After the divorce, what contact did you have with your father and his family?

ROSSMANN: I don't recall having met my father until after the Second World War, when he came to visit me in England. He had moved to France and then Switzerland, where he had remarried. But my mother occasionally took me to visit my father's parents in Wiesbaden, where they had a very stately Victorian-style house with servants—a very upper-middle-class lifestyle. My grandfather was a professor of French and the principal of the local Gymnasium, and he wrote textbooks. He had a little pointed beard and was physically quite imposing. When I went shopping with him, everybody greeted him, *"Guten Morgen, Herr Professor, Guten Morgen, Herr Professor!"*

He would spend time with me, and in one of our talks he asked me how many days there were in the year. I replied—I must have started school by that time, maybe about six years old—"Oh, there's so many you can't ever calculate that." "Well," he said, "let's sit down and see." He asked me to name and count the months of the year, then he asked me to help him put down the number of the days in each month, and then said, "Now let's add it up." I made a mistake in the addition, but he helped me correct it, and we came to 365 days. "Not so many really." I was very impressed.

Grandfather Rossmann was a very decent guy. He did a lot to support my mother, like giving her money for my upbringing. My father had left—he was working in Paris—and my grandfather was angry about his lack of support and later disinherited him.

And your grandmother?

ROSSMANN: She made a less favorable impression. When we arrived, it was as if the house were divided in two. My mother would talk to my grandfather, and grandmother refused to take part. She joined the others for meals, but afterwards she withdrew.

After her divorce, my mother returned to live with her parents in Frankfurt. They had a large house with servants. My grandfather was a well-known dealer in rare coins. He conducted his business in one part of the house.

My grandfather believed strongly in the education of women. My mother was educated at the Bauhaus.[15] She later worked as a feature writer for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, doing commentaries about the city in the so-called *Stadtplatt* (city record) section of the paper. Her articles were illustrated with her own drawings.

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* was one of Germany's greatest liberal papers. It was founded in 1866 by Leopold Sonnemann, a Jew,

who owned it until his death in 1909. Sonnemann also served in the Reichstag for eleven years (1871–76, 1878–84) and on the Frankfurt city council. In his will Sonnemann specified his newspaper continue to advocate freedom of political expression. Sonnemann was also involved in the establishment of the University of Frankfurt. Sonnemann with others, like Rudolf Mosse, founder of the *Berliner Tagblatt* (1871), and Leopold Ullstein, owner of the *Neues Berliner Tagblatt,* became known as the "Jewish press barons," proof enough to antisemites that Jews were controlling the German newspaper industry and exerting a malevolent influence on German society.

ROSSMANN: While my mother worked my grandmother looked after me. I also had a nanny, who lived upstairs.

Before I could read by myself, my grandmother read to me in the evenings from a child's Bible. Always from the Old Testament, because my grandmother didn't like to read from the New Testament.

My grandparents went to the synagogue on holy days, but they did not keep kosher and always had a Christmas tree. The more Orthodox members of the family used to complain about this. They also disapproved of my grandparents' eating ham.

My mother accompanied her parents to the synagogue on the holy days, but she did not relate well to the Jewish religion. She thought that many people who went to the synagogue were superficial in their beliefs and went primarily to show off their clothes.

My mother joined the Society of Friends. The religion's philanthropic aspects attracted her after the First World War, when she observed the Quakers helping to alleviate the German food shortages.[16] My mother was very idealistic and socially conscious. She was very much a pacifist and was involved in the emancipation of women movement in Weimar Germany.

My mother did not think of herself as being Jewish. She, like the other members of her family, was proud to be a German. My mother's brother had fought for Germany in the First World War. My grandmother's brother Ludwig had belonged to a dueling fraternity and boasted of the big scar on his cheek.

Jewish students, excluded from Gentile fraternities (as had indeed been the case in the United States), formed their own dueling societies, adopting similar uniforms, rules, and rituals, complete

with banners, colors, flags, mottos, and William II mustaches. By 1896, there were five such corporations in Germany, formed into the Convention of Fraternities of German Students of the Jewish Faith. The Convention's constitution pledged to promote Jewish pride and fight against antisemitism. In addition, it declared itself "inextricably bound to the German fatherland by history, culture and a community of law."

How did your mother's association with the Quakers resonate with the rest of the family?

ROSSMANN: I don't know the exact answer. I do know that my mother wasn't very satisfied with the rituals of the Jewish faith. They didn't mean much to her, and Quakers are particularly strong in not having rituals.

You don't sense that she was ostracized in any way because of her conversion?

ROSSMANN: I think the family considered it a little bit extreme.

Notes

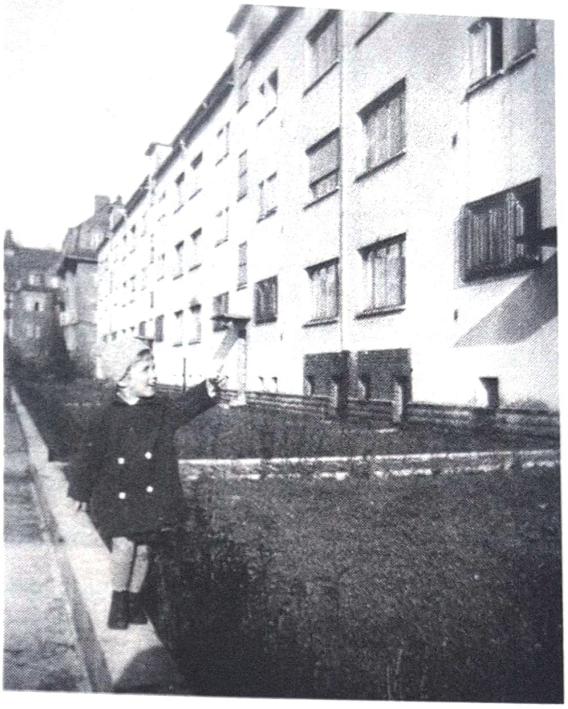
1. The law was passed by 444 to 538 votes, with only the Social Democrats voting against. The Communists, barred from participation, could not vote. This enabling act also gave Hitler the authority to change the present constitution.
2. The Gemarah, existing in both Palestinian and Babylonian versions, contains a series of commentaries and interpretations of the Mishnah—a collection of teachings from the classical period of rabbinic Judaism, 200–500 C.E. The Mishnah and Gemarah together comprise the Talmud. Transcription from the oral tradition and constant subsequent redaction have contributed to a multiplicity of conflicting opinions, which are subject themselves to further disagreement. Modern scholars are not even of one mind as to whether the Talmud is supposed to be primarily legal or pedagogical.
3. In fulfillment of the command in Deuteronomy 22:12: "You shall make twisted tassels on the four corners of your cloaks which you wrap around you" (New English Bible). Orthodox Jews wore these "fringes" on a four-cornered garment *(tallit)* as symbolic protection against immoral conduct and to remind them of observance of their religious duties.
4. "You shall not wear clothes woven with two kinds of yarn, wool and flax together." Deuteronomy 22:11 (New English Bible).

5. The Borochov Youth took inspiration from philosopher-politician Ber Borochov (1881–1917), who tried to reconcile "scientific socialism" with the needs of the Jewish people. Borochov believed that the Jewish masses, uprooted and nonproductive in the Diaspora, were driven to escape their precarious, exploited existence through migration to Palestine, where both economic and ethnic liberation would be achieved. Mapai, founded in Palestine in 1930, combined the ideal of national redemption with socialism in a Jewish homeland.
6. This organization, founded in 1916, attempted to combine Jewish cultural values and the establishment and defense of a homeland in Palestine with the resolution of the class struggle of the Jewish proletariat.
7. This, of course, is Golomb's opinion. In fact, many German Jews felt just the opposite and feared that National Socialism would lead to a virulent kind of political antisemitism.
8. It was a three-way race among Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, seeking a second term; Nazi leader Adolf Hitler; and Ernst Thälmann, the Communist candidate.
9. Over one-third of the people collected in this "new" state were ethnically non-Polish, being largely German, Ukrainian, White Russian, Lithuanian, or Jewish.
10. Actually Przeworsk had a population of around three thousand at the turn of the century.
11. Literally "jackets," in Yiddish, *yekkes.* The meaning can be anything from "uptight" to "reserved" to "snooty."
12. On a personal level this cautioned self-restraint: no loud talking, gesticulating, or wearing sloppy clothes. The concept also extended to the worship service, which had to be conducted with utmost decorum and bourgeois respectability, including the wearing of dark suits and top hats on the holidays. In teaching the avoidance of everything that might arouse *rischus,* Eastern European Jews were in part adapting the attitudes of the very *yekke* they criticized.
13. The Jewish population of Baden in that year was 24,000.
14. A very famous piece of business from act 3 of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus.* Frank, the prison warden, returns to his office at the jail directly from an all-night party and falls asleep at his desk, the newspaper he was reading falling over his face, his lit cigar still clenched in his mouth.
15. The Bauhaus (Das Staatliche Bauhaus), founded at Weimar in 1919 by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), was an amalgamation of the School of Plastic Arts and the School of Arts and Trades, established eighteen years before by Henri Van de Velde (1863–1957). Gropius strove to form a new union of artists and artisans to construct "a future that will unite everything: architecture, painting, and sculpture in a single formation." At various times the Bauhaus had on its faculty such titans as

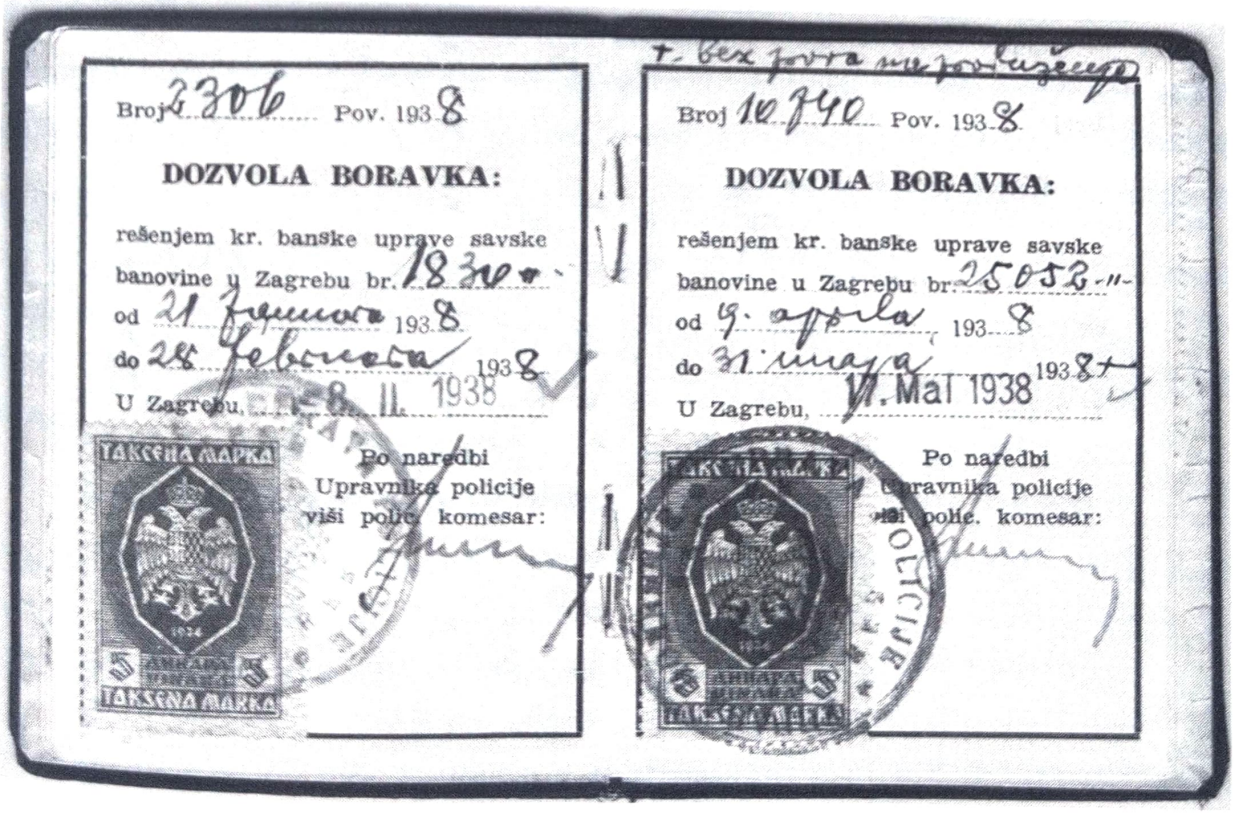
Marcel Breuer, Paul Klee, Josef Albers, Wassili Kandinski, and Lyonel Feininger. The student body, evenly balanced between men and women, was chosen on the basis of work presented, not diplomas. The rightist government of Weimar judged the school too revolutionary, forcing its transfer in 1925 to Dessau, which was more hospitable under its Social Democratic administration. However, by 1932 the National Socialists and their allies controlled the municipal government and voted 20 to 5 to throw this "Judeo-Marxist place" out of town. On April 1, 1933, Brown Shirts invaded the Bauhaus complex, arrested thirty-two students, and seized "a lot of illegal propaganda material." Such Nazi assaults on artistic freedom forced director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) to dissolve the school that July. Although the Nazis denounced the Bauhaus style as being un-German, much National Socialist architecture reflected the Bauhaus's neat classicism.

16. The deprivations of wartime continued because the Allied blockade lasted until June 1919, when Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles.

Michael Rossmann and his mother.



Michael Rossman playing outside the apartment building where he lived with his mother and maternal grandparents.



Michael Golomb's residency permits to live in Zagreb in 1938. Note the frequent renewals.

port until they reached maturity. Since government money was scarce, private donations were crucial.

Stanley Baldwin launched his Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees. The Home Office gave the scheme its blessing but admonished the former prime minister to avoid making his solicitations for money seem like an attack on the Nazi regime. Much support also came from individual citizens; many were willing to pledge £50 in sponsorship. In addition, countless volunteers helped at various stages, beginning with the initial processing when the boats landed and the transfer of the refugees to hostels or foster homes began.

HABERER: I left Germany in early December 1938—the coldest winter in a hundred years. The boat had hundreds of children, and it was chaos. After we landed, I was sent to Lowestoft, on the southeast coast of England, where we were processed, given a medical exam, and fed. Some people came with us from Germany [chaperones of the Jewish Refugee Committee], but there were not enough of them to take care of all these children, most of whom spoke no English.

They put me in one of those wooden shacks that you have on the seashore where people change and dress, and for a couple of nights I slept there by myself. I was terrified, not knowing what was going on, asking myself, "Why am I here?" The people looking out for us apparently had no psychological understanding of the situation.

They gave me a hot water bottle, but it was so cold that the hot water bottle became a block of ice. Consequently I caught a bladder infection, and they sent me to a hospital where the nurses didn't speak German, and I didn't speak English. Nobody visited me. So I was by myself.

History Taught as Propaganda: Michael Rossmann

"It was a daily struggle coming to school and also going home. I always tried to hide on my way home because there were kids who would lie in wait and beat me up."

Hiding on the Way Home

Despite being a Quaker, despite her strong identification with Germany and German culture, Rossmann's mother was nonetheless considered a Jew and a threat, and in 1935 the Nazis forced

the *Frankfurter Zeitung* to fire her. It's unclear why it took so long, since the Boycott of April 1, 1933, had signaled the expulsion of the *Rassejuden* from the press, the theater, and the motion picture industry, and special legislation of September 22, 1933, made employment in these industries dependent on joining specific professional organizations, or chambers, which prohibited Jewish membership.

What did your mother do after she lost her job?

MICHAEL ROSSMANN: She opened a crafts studio and gave lessons to Jewish children.

When did you start school?

ROSSMANN: I started in 1936, shortly after Easter. I was five years old. I first attended a Jewish school, but after my first year I was transferred to a *Volksschule*, a public school. And this immediately caused me a great deal of trouble.

Rossmann switched from a Jewish school to a German public school at a time when most Jewish children were doing just the opposite. Because his mother was Jewish and his father was Aryan, the Nazis considered him a *Mischling*, a "non-Aryan," that is, one not of "pure German blood," but neither a "full-blood Jew."

The Nazis had a bit of trouble sorting out such distinctions and putting them into legislation. The racial decree of April 11, 1933, had defined non-Aryans as persons who had one Jewish parent or grandparent and who belonged to the Jewish religious community. But this law was found to lack precision.

For example, it made no distinction between "full Jews"—that is, those with four Jewish grandparents—and "quarter Jews," those with only one Jewish grandparent. Nazi racial experts had a problem determining at what point the Aryan genes predominated and at what point the Jewish genes prevailed. Some maintained that Teutonic genes took charge only when the ratio was three to one, thus making all quarter Jews German, an approach the Nazi Party favored. But others disagreed, and their views influenced those who drafted the Reich Citizenship Law of November 14, 1935.

This law, finalized during the Nazi Party Congress at Nürnberg, divided non-Aryans into Jews and *Mischlinge.* It said that a Jew was anyone who had at least three Jewish grandparents or who had two Jewish grandparents and either practiced the Jewish religion or was married to a Jew. It said that the *Mischling,* or person of mixed blood, was someone who had two Jewish grandparents and did not practice the Jewish religion or someone who was married to a Jew. In subsequent legislation the categories of "*Mischling* of the First Degree" and "*Mischling* of the Second Degree" were added. A *Mischling* of the First Degree was one who fit the 1935 Nürnberg definition; a *Mischling* of the Second Degree was anyone who had one Jewish grandparent.

Life for a *Mischling* of either category often meant repression and humiliation. They were discharged from the civil service, they could not join the Nazi Party, they could not become officers in the armed forces, and they could not marry Germans without permission. However, such denigration was still preferable to being classified a full Jew. The Nazis targeted the full Jews for their greatest fury. But the *Mischlinge* were also scorned, since these people were still tainted with Jewish blood.

Children of mixed marriages, like Michael Rossmann, whose parents had severed ties with the Jewish religion, were obviously better off than those who had not. Rossmann's continuance in a Jewish school would have been considered ipso facto adherence to the Jewish religion and have resulted in his classification as a full Jew. Sending him to a public school strengthened his Christian identity (albeit not that strongly in a nontraditional sect like the Quakers) and helped to confirm him as a *Mischling.* A formal challenge of this might have led to a hearing in a racial court. Evidence against him might have included the fact that he was still living in a "Jewish household," both his grandmother and mother—despite her conversion to Quakerism—being considered full Jews.

However, from the way he was treated at the *Volksschule,* the distinction between Jew and *Mischling* hardly seemed to matter. Rossmann clearly became a victim of the regime's *Judenpolitik.* Any people who were deemed to carry the Jewish contagion were considered racial enemies worthy of dehumanization and isolation from the *Volksgemeinschaft,* or to use a contemporary German metaphor, eliminated like poisoned mushrooms in a forest.

ROSSMANN: From the time I entered the *Volksschule,* my life became terrible. I was considered "the Jewish boy," and other students would call me names, and shout, "Jude, Jude, Jude!" I was chased all the time, people howling behind me. It was a daily struggle coming to school and also going home. I always tried to hide on my way home because there were kids who would lie in wait and beat me up.

Did this harassment happen just outside of class?

ROSSMANN: In class too. I was rather good at mathematics, but my mathematics teacher, a man named Schenk, made it a practice of terrorizing me. He'd stride into class, a big class of forty to fifty students, and greet us with "Heil Hitler," and, of course, we all had to answer in the same way. (I knew that was the wrong thing to do, but I had to do it like all the rest.) And then he would call on people to answer questions. When it came my turn, he would badger me with questions to make me nervous. I would make mistakes, and then he'd shout, "You, Jewish boy, come up here."

Once when I went before the class, the teacher took out a long ruler, which he used for drawing on the blackboard, and he hit me across the face with it. The ruler broke, and the whole class laughed.

They were taking away your self-worth, weren't they? Kind of what the Americans did to the blacks. Ultimately people would internalize this treatment and begin to think that maybe they were inferior.

ROSSMANN: I don't think I saw myself as inferior, but I began to perform badly at school, making careless mistakes. I still have that problem. I can easily make mistakes.

What you went through for those two years was horribly traumatic.

ROSSMANN: Nothing compared to what people went through in the concentration camps.

You can always compare yourself to those who had it worse, but you don't have to be up against a firing squad to have traumatic experiences. In your case, it would seem, it took a terrible psychic toll.

ROSSMANN: I think it did.

What were you taught in social studies or literature classes?

ROSSMANN: We learned a lot of Teutonic mythology, about the German gods—Wotan and Donner and Siegfried. The invasion of Austria [in March 1938] was,

of course, justified as lawful and right. I knew that the history I was taught was propaganda. But I have a difficult time recalling the details because I had such a hard time learning with all that harassment.

I was fortunate, after a while, in being able to change into the class of a teacher who lived a block away from our apartment, and he took pity on me and had me walk with him to school. But on the way home I could not always rely on him. He had other things to do, and his schedule was not always the same as mine. I had to be careful going home.

On one occasion, I ran to get away. But when I came to my apartment building and buzzed to get in, nobody was home. I pushed every buzzer in the building and finally somebody from another apartment let me in just in time. Once, though, I was not so lucky and got hot tar poured down my back. Another time I was tied up.

Did you tell your mother about what was happening to you?

ROSSMANN: I never told her much about it.

Then by not complaining you were trying to protect your mother?

ROSSMANN: Tried to, yes. My mother had a very good friend from the *Frankfurter Zeitung,* and he had two daughters who attended the same school as I. One of them was in the same class with Herr Schenk. Once when I was visiting this friend with my mother, he told her that this daughter had told him that "one of the Jewish boys" was hit with a ruler. I blushed very strongly. I thought nothing more had to be said. But my mother didn't appear to react.

There was never any protest to the school?

ROSSMANN: My mother could not possibly have protested.

How did you feel about being tagged as a Jew, even though "officially" you were not?

ROSSMANN: I felt that if that's the way my parents were, then "Okay, I'm Jewish." But religion didn't come into this. We were not religious. And my mother was, as I said, a Quaker.

Were you aware of Kristallnacht [November 9, 1938]?

ROSSMANN: Not directly. My mother and grandmother told me about the synagogues being burned, how many of their friends had their businesses smashed and looted, about the anti-Jewish signs on the storefronts.

On the night of November 9–10, Frankfurt's four major synagogues were all torched. In addition, SA units attacked and looted Jewish businesses, community halls, and dwellings. The vandals were joined by other street ruffians. But the greatest thieves were the German insurance companies, which were threatened with heavy losses because of the destruction of Jewish property and connived with the Nazi leaders to cheat their policyholders out of what was owed.

Kristallnacht also saw the arrest of hundreds of Frankfurt's Jewish men, who were then sent to concentration camps, notably Dachau and Buchenwald. The Nazis then merged the members of the Orthodox and the Reform Communities into a single organization: the Jüdische Gemeinde. Following Kristallnacht, Jews were expelled from German schools. The decree, strictly speaking, did not apply to *Mischlinge,* but those who stayed were made to suffer.

ROSSMANN: We were visited by the Gestapo. The agents seemed to be looking for some papers pertaining to my grandfather's numismatic business. After his death, it had been moved to Switzerland, and its remaining files taken into the garden and burned. So the Gestapo agents found nothing. They ransacked the place and stole many things.

Shortly after Kristallnacht, my mother sent me to a school in Holland.

In 1938, the Nazis pushed Aryanization into high gear. A decree of April 25 ordered the registration of all Jewish assets and property, both in and outside the country. This included all agricultural property, urban real estate, business capital, personal wealth—i.e., money held in bank notes, insurance policies, unpaid debts, securities, and valuable art, stamps, and coins—anything which exceeded a combined value of 5,000 marks. The official registration of assets form was a highly detailed multipage document. This legislation was followed by a series of decrees resulting in the almost total elimination of Jewish participation in the German economy, except as consumers.

The November pogrom highlighted the determination to enforce this policy and to confiscate as much of the Jewish assets as possible. Some of the most outrageous examples of brutalization,

extortion, and confiscation now took place. The looting of the Rossmann apartment shows that Gestapo agents thought it was now their turn to grab what they could of Jewish private assets.

The numismatic business would have, in any case, been confiscated. The interior ministry paved the way for the destruction of Jewish economic activity in industry and in wholesale and retail trade by requiring the registration of all Jewish commercial activity. Jews were also prohibited from engaging in any trade outside their official town or residence. Still left on the agenda was the "Aryanization" of Jewish homes and apartments, especially in urban areas. The ultimate goal was the resettlement and ghettoizing of those who had not fled.

ROSSMANN: I didn't have many friends. I had one very good non-Jewish friend. We were always together. But toward the end, I couldn't go and see him anymore because his mother was just afraid. Not that she disliked me, but, you know, she also had to think about her own safety.

After Christmas in 1938, Rossmann's mother sent him to Holland to continue his education. Most of the kids in the school he attended were from German Jewish families. The languages of instruction were Dutch, German, and English.

An Education Clearing Scheme allowed German Jewish parents to deposit tuition and maintenance money with the Berlin-based Palestine Trusteeship Corporation to support their children's study outside Germany. The Nazi authorities wanted to stimulate Jewish emigration and at the same time maintain control over the money involved. In 1937, the economy ministry used Paltrau as a source of foreign exchange by allowing foreign organizations and individuals to contribute to the fund—a possibility that existed until 1941.

ROSSMANN: I was very, very happy to go. But I wasn't very good at the school because I felt alone without my family and home. I didn't seem able to learn and was regarded as somewhat slow. They were very nice, but they put me in a sort of remedial class. I think they thought I was retarded.

You were there for the whole spring term?

ROSSMANN: Until the summer of 1939, when I returned to Germany.

When you returned the preparations for leaving Germany had already been completed?

ROSSMANN: My grandmother had already emigrated to England.[23] And before she left, she told my mother that it was time for the rest of us to "get out."

Why didn't your mother leave with her?

ROSSMANN: She was very fond of Germany. It must have been a terrible time for her. She wanted to stay, but her brother and my grandmother and other members of the family persuaded her to leave. But she wanted to stay long enough to attend the annual meeting of the German Society of Friends.

Why do you think your grandmother was more aware of the danger than your mother?

ROSSMANN: My grandmother used to have constant arguments with a friend of hers who lived in Hamburg. My grandmother would say, "You've got to get out. It's not going to be safe here." And the friend replied, "No, I'm safe here because my late husband was a judge. Nobody will do anything to me." My grandmother was still in a way very Jewish in her thought. On the other hand, my mother was more cosmopolitan and assimilated and perhaps was hoping the Nazi repression would blow over.

Before we left, we buried our knives and forks and other silver in the garden of one of my mother's non-Jewish friends. As you know, we couldn't take anything out of Germany. We got it all back after the war and now use it for parties and special occasions.

We left for England in July, traveling through the Netherlands: The Hague, Heok van Holland. It was a rather enjoyable experience. We crossed the channel at night; my mother and I had a little cabin, and I went to sleep and woke up when the boat docked at Harwich. We took the train to London, and my grandmother was there to meet us when we got off at Liverpool Street Station. It was very nice to see my grandmother.

I thought my stay in England would be short. I fully expected to go back to that school in Holland to begin the fall term, and I made absolutely no effort to learn English. I didn't need to. I was completely surrounded by my German-speaking family.

That summer we all went on a vacation to the beach near Worthing [a popular sea resort in West Sussex]. It was to be a last reunion before I would return

to Holland for the fall term. I don't know what my mother's thinking was. I guess because the Dutch schooling had been already paid for, I was supposed to learn English in Holland in order to get an Oxford school certificate. But then I had to stay in England, where we lived in vastly reduced circumstances, dependent on the charity of my grandmother's brother-in-law.

Rossmann was to report back to the Dutch school on September 3. But on Friday, September 1, at 4:45 in the morning, Wehrmacht *Panzer* units rolled across the Polish frontier. All those kids who remained in that school Rossmann attended in Holland had little chance to survive.

Notes

1. See Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 123.
2. In very few cases some Jews did amazingly survive. One of these was the famous scholar Victor Klemperer, who remained in Dresden, one of the only 198 Jews still there at the beginning of 1945. Even as the war drew to an end, the Nazis worked hard to dispatch the few remaining Jews still alive in Germany. Ordered to report for deportation, Klemperer took advantage of the confusion resulting from the Allied firebombing of the city to flee to southern Bavaria and the safety of the American army. Klemperer's unique view of life in Nazi Germany is recounted in his *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933–1941* (New York: Random House, 1999).
3. These were the top ten countries worldwide.
4. Enumerated by Section 3 of Immigration Act of February 5, 1917.
5. Documents were judged "unavailable" if they could not be obtained without risk of serious inconvenience (aside from normal delay and expense in obtaining it) "involving personal injury, embarrassment, or financial loss either to the immigrant or to a member of his family, as might occur in the case of a immigrant who is a political or religious refugee." Statement of the Immigration Laws and Practices of the United States of America Governing the Reception of Immigrants, in *The Holocaust: Selected Documents,* 5:236.
6. There were 1,919 visas issued in 1933, 4,393 in 1934, 5,201 in 1935, 6,346 in

An English Public School Education: Michael Rossmann

"Part of the Quaker teaching is to be a pacifist, not to fight, and I can tell you many anecdotes which the Quakers tell to extol the pacifist approach in difficult situations. I could agree that was the right way, but I don't think approaching Hitler this way was likely to succeed."

Regaining Equilibrium

Michael Rossmann and his mother arrived in Britain with few financial resources. They were fortunate in having relatives in Britain willing to guarantee that they would not become a burden to the public treasury. Since Jewish emigrants were legally allowed to take out of Germany only ten marks each if they were traveling to a country whose borders were not contiguous with Germany, like Britain or the United States, Rossmann and his mother had twenty marks tops, or roughly eight dollars. Of course, their railway and boat passages had been prepaid in Reichsmarks.

As they were settling in, the British government was implementing its crisis emergency plans. It established special ministries for shipping, information, economic warfare, and food. Under a program of civilian defense adopted in 1935, the British began constructing air-raid warning systems and bomb shelters. The country was divided into several evacuation zones for the transfer of people, mostly juveniles from large urban areas. The government also ordered the distribution of gas masks, imposed blackouts in large cities, closed movie theaters, and began to ration foodstuffs. The progress was slow, as the Chamberlain government felt the best attitude toward the war was one of restraint.

The prime minister favored imposing a blockade on Germany, hoping that this would bring about the collapse of the German homefront. The Royal Air Force flew some "truth" missions, in which planes dumped millions of propaganda leaflets on German cities to convince the people they could not win the war. Until April 1940, British military operations were confined to keeping the German U-boats and commerce raiders at bay. The reluctance to begin

land operations stemmed from a lack of preparation and a fear of repeating the bloodletting of the First World War. Had it not been for the blackouts and the mass evacuation of children, mainly from the London area, domestic daily life seemed pretty much like that of peacetime.

MICHAEL ROSSMANN: My mother and grandmother got this little flat in North Finchley [about ten miles northwest of downtown London], and that's where I lived until the war started and the evacuations of the children began.

The first evacuations began on September 1, 1939. During the first month, 827,000 unaccompanied children and 524,000 mothers with preschoolers left the country's larger cities. However, after six months, when expected German air attacks failed to materialize, about 80 percent of those evacuated returned home. A second wave of evacuations began with the start of the Blitz in September 1940, and then a third wave in 1944 with the V-weapons attack. In all, the British government moved about 4 million adults and children out of the big cities during the course of the war, with another 2 million leaving privately. Many, though, moved back and forth, depending on their perception of the danger. British parents also sent their children out of harm's way to the United States and Canada.

ROSSMANN: My mother took me to live in a small village in Hartfordshire in a home with people who were friends of my uncle. That's where I started school; many of my classmates were kids who had been evacuated from London's East End. I couldn't speak any English, and all the kids sort of crowded around me and kind of poked me. It was all a bit frightening. I thought my mind was normal. But it was a painful time. I felt isolated and I didn't have anyone I could talk to at that school. But my teacher gave me a book of arithmetic, which is, after all, international, and he had me sit there and do sums while the other kids did something else. I thought it was fun, because I knew I could do the assignments. But actually I did the part of calculating money all wrong. English money operated on calculations of twelve and twenty, not decimals. It took me about two weeks to figure that out.

But somehow I started to learn English quite quickly. I don't know how that happened. I could soon understand the other kids. And then my mother

and I returned to North Finchley, maybe in October, and I entered this private school—I think my uncle Henry must have arranged it—and that was fantastic, because we had small classes. And the teacher was caring.

She started me on things like geometry and taught me a lot of English, and by Christmas I was reading! I was actually enjoying reading books in English. The first English book I ever read was a *Doctor Doolittle.* I was fascinated. I went to the public library and got more and more of his books. And after a while I started reading other books. There was Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* and [Baroness Emmuska Orczy's] *The Scarlet Pimpernel.* I started to read Dickens. *Oliver Twist* and *A Tale of Two Cities,* by which I was overtaken with sadness. I couldn't stop reading books. By January 1940, I must have been speaking English okay. So it didn't take me that long. However, until then, my life was very difficult. After I learned English, I transferred to Finchley High School.

By then you must have felt that changing schools was normal, that this is what you do when you're growing up.

ROSSMANN: I thought that was exactly the case. But as long as it was a decent school, it was all right.

Did you feel at this point that you were safe?

ROSSMANN: Well, you see, soon after that the real war started. And every night the place was being bombed. Houses were falling down all around us.

You were there during the Blitz?

ROSSMANN: At the beginning of the Blitz. I was desperately nervous. They had air-raid shelters, but we stayed in our apartment. There was an antiaircraft battery just outside our place, and in the morning the place was littered with shrapnel, which we boys actually liked to collect. There was a public swimming pool on some high ground, and from there you could see the whole horizon. And at night you could see the fires burning in East London.

The Battle of Britain reached its climax in August 1940 as the Luftwaffe shifted to a tactic of destroying Britain's major cities, in addition to smashing air defenses, communication networks, and armaments factories. London became a major target in both daytime and nighttime raids. As the Blitz continued and the likelihood of

destroying the Royal Air Force receded, breaking the morale of the British people through terror became the foremost goal.

In the opening phase of the Blitz, which lasted until November 1940, London was bombed every night save one, the heaviest attack taking place on October 15. Helped by bright moonlight, four hundred German bombers hit the capital in successive waves from half past eight in the evening until half past four the next morning. The British met the attack with antiaircraft fire and fighter planes but managed to destroy only one Heinkel 111.

Was North Finchley bombed?

ROSSMANN: Oh, yes! Buildings were destroyed everywhere.

And you still stayed?

ROSSMANN: Toward the end of the year, I was evacuated again to a place in Hartfordshire, where I attended a different school, and nobody spoke any German there. I lived with a family called Rose. The wife was very sympathetic, but the husband was not. He worked in the War Office and took the train to London every day. He must have felt uncomfortable having a German boy living in his house. I think he actually wanted to be kind, but he couldn't be.

Every night the air-raid sirens would go off around eight o'clock, and the all clear wasn't sounded until the next morning. But one night to everyone's surprise there were no sirens, no air raid. And shortly after that I returned to London and Finchley High School.

Since mid-November 1940, the Luftwaffe increasingly attacked industrial inland targets, such as Coventry, Nottingham, Birmingham, and Newcastle, as well as hitting various port cities: Southampton, Liverpool, Swansea, Bristol, Hull, Cardiff, and especially Plymouth. All England and southern Wales in effect became a battle zone. This phase of the Blitz ended in May 1941, when the German air fleets were withdrawn to participate in the forthcoming invasion of the Soviet Union.

Until then your life had been one of tremendous dislocation. At what point did you feel a certain stability?

ROSSMANN: Not until my mother got me a scholarship to go to Saffron Walden Finishing School, a Quaker boarding school in Essex, where I would remain for

the next six years.[3] I was homesick and not very happy there at first, but after a while I got to love the place, and it was there I regained my equilibrium. I started to enjoy life. I made lots of friends, some of whom I'm still in contact with today. Only about 50 percent of the people going to these schools at that time were from Quaker families; the others were from non-Quaker families.

How did you relate to your fellow classmates? After all, you had experiences that most of them could not share.

ROSSMANN: They knew I was not English by birth. But they didn't know about my experiences. Normally I didn't, and I still don't, tell these things to people.

You weren't singled out then as some sort of rare bird?

ROSSMANN: I felt accepted. We were not supposed to go out at night. But sometimes we did anyway. And sometimes we got caught. On one of those occasions, a mistress referred to me as "the German boy." And that really bugged me. I didn't want to be thought of as "the German boy."

I was not very keen on sports. Cricket, football, didn't impress me. I was more interested in my radio sets, and I was a woodworker. I liked to go for walks and explore, and I loved geography.

How did your studies there help shape your future?

ROSSMANN: There were nine Quaker boarding schools in Britain, all good schools. For instance, my math teacher, Arnold Brerton, confirmed my love of math and the way I think about it.

My grades in English and in English literature were never very good. I was pretty good at science and math, but not linguistics. And this now strikes me as funny, because when I look at my students and postdocs, I think their English is terrible. Learning Latin was quite a help in understanding grammar and construction and word origin.

In all your school experiences in England, did you ever get any nasty behavior from other students because you were Jewish?

ROSSMANN: Oh, no. No. No. None whatsoever.

Had any of your Jewish relatives remained in Germany?

ROSSMANN: None remained that I know of. Much of our family now lived in London. Mostly aunts and uncles. One of my great-uncles had a son who joined the British army and was in the war. He changed his name from Oppenheimer to Orpen, making it sound less Jewish should he ever have been captured by the

Germans. Some members of the family eventually emigrated to Canada or to the United States. My cousin Ralph, whose bar mitzvah I went to, ended up marrying the daughter of an Anglican bishop. They had a church wedding in a very nice cathedral.

As far as you know there is no longer any German side to your mother's family? I mean, none of these people who left ever returned?

ROSSMANN: That's right.

Those who wanted to get out got out?

ROSSMANN: And I think that's because we were moderately wealthy.

Between 1933 and 1939, 15,355 of Frankfurt's 26,158 Jews left for various destinations. In all some 52,000 German Jewish refugees found safety in Great Britain. After the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the Nazis rounded up most of those who remained and "resettled" them in the East: Minsk, Riga, and Theresienstadt—all way stations for the extermination camps. Only 600 Jews and *Mischlinge* remained in Frankfurt toward war's end.

Did socializing with the members of your mother's family involve participating in their religious ceremonies?

ROSSMANN: Hardly at all. Many were already assimilated or were well on the way. They considered themselves primarily Germans.

However, the Nazi racial laws determined that only certain ethnic groups could be part of the fatherland. For you, as a small child, not being considered German must have been terribly traumatic, and for your mother it must have been devastating.

ROSSMANN: Much more devastating for my mother than for me.

Because she identified much more strongly with her Deutschtum, *which she liked, than with her* Judentum, *which she didn't. Something not uncommon among some German Jews. It often led to a certain amount of self-hatred.*

ROSSMANN: I recently saw a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* that illustrates that point. There's this dentist who joins the Franks in their hiding place, and he makes a comment that he's Dutch, and why is he suddenly being identified as a Jew?

What were you learning about the war other than what was happening during the Blitz?

ROSSMANN: I knew about the many Jewish refugees arriving in Britain. Many of these were interned in a big camp on the Isle of Man. At the time, it was difficult to understand why these people should be confined. Maybe the British feared that there might be some sham refugees who might actually be spies. But how could they be? I think it was a lack of understanding. Obviously internment on the Isle of Man was not like Dachau. They had entertainment and seminars, and they were released fairly quickly. But some of our friends feared they might be sent to Canada.

How were you keeping up with the progress of the war?

ROSSMANN: My mother got a job drawing maps for the *Zeitung,* a newspaper operated by the ministry of information for German refugees that reported the daily progress of the war. I was following the action very closely. I knew all the towns in Russia along the battlefront. I read the newspaper. Our class in boarding school subscribed to the *News Chronicle,* and on Sundays we went into Saffron Walden to attend the Friends meeting, and I would always stop at a certain shop and buy *The Observer.*

Were you cheering the Allies on?

ROSSMANN: Oh, yeah.

What about the bombings of Frankfurt? How did that affect you?

ROSSMANN: It didn't affect me too much, but it did my mother and grandmother. The destruction of the old town, which my mother loved. The scenes that she drew for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* were of places that were now gone. But I was happy the Allies were winning.

Was there a feeling that the Germans were getting what they deserved?

ROSSMANN: No. That would have been un-Quakerly. But I don't think I ever entertained the concept that the Allies might not win. Only much later did I realize how close Britain came to invasion. I don't think that it crossed my mind at the time.

You still had your family. And in London there were a lot of German Jews, a community. Were people beginning to realize that terrible things were happening to Jews in Europe?

ROSSMANN: I think we knew it even before we found out in the news commentaries. Even before coming to England. I knew that life was not safe in Germany. That Jews were being tortured and killed in concentration camps.

True, but still that is certainly not the Final Solution.

ROSSMANN: That's right, but after the war, when the concentration camps were being liberated and reports were appearing in the newspaper—my grandmother tried to stop me from reading the newspapers, but I read them anyway—the horrors did not come as a surprise.

So you suspected the worst?

ROSSMANN: Not suspected, I knew. I didn't think of anything else. I didn't know the details or the numbers, but my experience in Germany made me believe that Hitler was out there to remove the Jews by one means or another.[4]

After the war, a lot of our English friends would ask if we would return to Germany. I can't explain now why it's such a strange thought. I suppose it was a logical thought to those English, but at the time it didn't seem that way. To us such a prospect seemed totally impossible. Even now, when I go to Germany, I kind of feel uneasy. Not that I'm afraid of being harassed, but I just don't feel very comfortable.

Growth of a Jewish Identity: Joseph Haberer

"I hung on to books like a lifeboat, trying to refashion myself by reading and living in another, more hopeful world."

An Orthodox Religious Environment

When Haberer was at Lowestoft, one of the children came down with the measles. This led to everybody being quarantined, and Haberer remained there several weeks in total isolation.

JOSEPH HABERER: The nurses were nice, but we couldn't communicate. It was like being in school in Germany, separated from the other kids so as not to give them a disease. When I was finally discharged, I was in a terrible state. I walked around in a daze.

And then I shut down and sank into some sort of black hole. I had an almost total loss of memory, which lasted about two and a half years. I had ap-

Michael Rossmann's 1939 visa to enter the United Kingdom specified a pleasure visit of about three weeks. Germany's invasion of Poland, and subsequent war with England, extended his stay until 1956.

Fritz Cohen in Florence, Italy, 1938, where he attended a private school run by German Jews.

GARTENHAUS: In my immediate family, only my paternal grandmother didn't make it. Before we left, my father set her up in a place of her own in a small town near Kassel. But in 1942, she was picked up and, with the rest of the Kassel Jews, sent to a concentration camp, and to her death.

Also in Germany my best friend was a guy named Siegi Adler. One winter, we were walking across the Fulda River when it was frozen over. The ice broke; I fell into the river and would have drowned had he not pulled me out. I remember afterwards sitting by the stove, warming my frozen wet clothes without realizing that he had saved my life!

Did he get out?

GARTENHAUS: He didn't make it. He was supposed to go to Australia, but he never got there. Nobody in Kassel, as far as I know, survived if they stayed.

A More Rational Than Mystic Approach: Michael Rossmann

"I don't think [my children or their children] will ever have this feeling of being outsiders in terms of race or religion or speech in any way, and that makes me very happy."

My Heimat *Is Science*

Rossmann graduated from secondary school in 1948 at the top of his class; he intended to go to the university and major in science. But the Friends School at Saffron Walden had not catered to such academic needs, giving him only superficial preparation in physics, chemistry, and mathematics. He knew he was not getting the best instruction, but saw the long-run benefit in having to teach himself. Not being spoon-fed was a good experience.

He began his higher education at the Polytechnic Institute, an external college of the University of London, graduating three years later with a degree in physics and mathematics. Eventually, he became a Ph.D. student at the University of Glasgow, and at the same time taught as an instructor at the local Royal Technical College (now the University of Strathclyde). After three years, he received his doctoral degree (in 1956).

Were you a British citizen by then?

MICHAEL ROSSMANN: Yes. My mother became a British citizen in 1945, when I was still a minor, and I got my citizenship through her.

Were you identifying with your new country?

ROSSMANN: In England, I always felt not English. I had an accent. Most people who came to England at my age would have lost it, but I didn't. Accents in England do count. I was always identified as not being English. But my education was English. I was a teenager in England, and that was very meaningful. I had left home and was no longer part of the German refugee community.

I wanted to stay in England. But after I got my Ph.D., I wanted postdoctorate experience in the United States. Many of the graduates from the university had gone to the United States for postdoctoral studies. By then I had married Audrey, and although we never discussed coming to the United States, when one of the professors from the University of Minnesota, someone who had been a visiting professor at Oxford, offered me an assistantship, we decided to accept and stay there for two years. After that, we would return, and I would get a position in some British university.

At the point when we were ready to leave America and come back to England, we found that we could easily have stayed. It was a fine university, and Minnesota had all these lakes and beautiful blue skies. But then I got a senior postdoc with the Medical Research Council Unit for Molecular Biology in the Cavandish Laboratory of Cambridge University.

Rossmann worked for the Medical Research Council. He also had a tutoring position, which involved giving tutorials and monitoring the progress of undergraduates of Peterhouse (College).[6] The cost of living in Cambridge was very high, which the presence of American military personnel living in the area exacerbated. But with an inheritance from his mother's and grandmother's estates, he was able to buy a small house for about two thousand pounds. His contract was initially for three years and was extended once.

ROSSMANN: Cambridge was very, very exciting. This was where molecular biology had started. I was literally next door to people like Francis Crick, the discoverer of the double helix. We would meet for coffee time at 11:00 in the morning. I wrote a whole paper based on coffee time conversations with Francis.

I wanted to stay there. At Cambridge I was able to develop a technology that is now used in biological sciences all over the world. But when my second contract was not renewed after six years, I had to look around for another job. I was sad to leave.

After he had returned from his postdoctoral experience in Minnesota, he never considered that he would return to the United States. He considered himself a British resident. However, it was apparent Oxford and Cambridge "old boys" were preferred for permanent employment.

You felt like you had been treated as an outsider?

ROSSMANN: Those with the wrong accent are not so easily accepted in Cambridge. It doesn't matter so much in America, because so many people are foreign.[7]

Did you feel that things were unfair in many ways?

ROSSMANN: I would never use the word "unfair." I felt envious of those who had a chance of going to the best universities. I had not attended "The Good University." I subsequently found out, when I was a tutor at Cambridge, that the students there weren't all that stupendous and gifted. A lot of them had ability, but they were hardly outstanding.

When you encountered this contretemps at Cambridge, did it seem logical for you to consider coming to the United States, or to find a position in, say, Europe?

ROSSMANN: I received six separate good offers to come to America, and I chose Purdue because I was offered more personal support in terms of what I wanted to do.

Today we've got a structural biology subgroup in the department with thirteen faculty members. That represents one of the largest, if not the largest, such division in any American university. I think this continuing support came because we did good science, but also because when I persevered, I usually got what I wanted.

Coming from Cambridge, England, to the American Midwest at times must have seemed like a lonely battle.

ROSSMANN: The first five years, especially. I had come from a place, which, for

my science, was the center of the universe, and there was nothing here. Purdue lacked the stimulation that I had at Cambridge. Here I had to teach people to achieve the level that I felt was acceptable.

Also coming here we encountered racial prejudice. My first assistant was a black woman from Gary. At that time, in 1964, there were maybe only a dozen or so African-Americans at Purdue. When she first came to Purdue, this graduate assistant had to live in what was called the "black ghetto" across town by Market Square. Considering my own experience with racial prejudice, none of this made any sense, and as a result I became very involved in the local civil rights movement. I was active on campus with various black groups. We actually tried to get the university to establish a Black Cultural Center, but were turned down flat. Later on it was established.

When did you become a citizen?

ROSSMANN: We waited approximately ten years, and that was because of the Vietnam War, which didn't exactly agree with our pacifist principles.

Considering that you were torn from your homeland and had undergone many dislocations since, did you feel at home here?

ROSSMANN: If you had asked me where my home was, where I would want to retire, I would say Lafayette, Indiana.

You don't feel now like a displaced person? As if this were not your Heimat?

ROSSMANN: No. I was not born in Lafayette, but I've lived here most of my adult life—longer than in any other place. In a way my *Heimat* is science. The international community of scientists means a lot to me. I have friends all over the world, and if I were to ever retire, I wouldn't mind being, say, the corresponding secretary of the National Academy of Sciences.

But I would be reluctant to leave this particular house, where our family grew up. We want to be sure that anyone of our family can always feel that they can come back to this home, to their roots, if you like.

Did you ever entertain thoughts of going back to England?

ROSSMANN: Living in England now doesn't make sense. It seems a concept almost as strange as the one of returning to Germany after the war. We're settled here.

Any kind of questions about "who am I really?"

ROSSMANN: Not in a very conscious way.

AUDREY ROSSMANN: He doesn't know who he is. And he doesn't want to know, either.

ROSSMANN: I still think of myself as Jewish in ancestry, whether or not I am a practicing Jew or Christian.

Could you expand on these various identities?

ROSSMANN: In terms of religion, my mother thought that being Jewish was a matter of private concern, like being a Protestant or a Catholic in the United States. She considered herself a Jew from a genetic point of view. And that's how I feel about myself. Of course Jewishness also includes religion, but there are all kinds of Jewish religions: Orthodox and non-Orthodox, all with their own differences.

There have been many studies of the experiences of Jewish children, not all of them refugees, who went to a culture, a non-Jewish culture, one different from theirs, and that left an enormous imprint on them with negative psychological consequences, affecting them for the rest of their lives.

ROSSMANN: I was aware that I came from a partly Jewish background, but in Britain I considered myself primarily a Quaker.

Your mother, I take it, tried to persuade you to become a Quaker?

ROSSMANN: It was very obvious. In England, she was an active member of the Quaker meeting and would take me to Sunday school there. I always had the feeling, and it was certainly true for me, that my mother was primarily interested in the philanthropic aspect of Quakerism, in the concept of creating an ideal community.

Other than genetics, what did being Jewish mean to your mother?

ROSSMANN: One could almost say that certain aspects of my mother were anti-semitic. She had hair color and blue eyes like mine. I think she was quite happy to not look Jewish. My grandmother, on the other hand, looked very Jewish, but she was quite negative and prejudiced about the Jews who came from the east, from Poland.

German Jews were very sensitive to the bad impression these eastern people would create and they wanted to get them out of Germany very quickly. That feeling was very common.

ROSSMANN: Yeah, she would tell me all the time that they behaved differently from Germans.

How much have you told your children about your life story?

ROSSMANN: Our three children are all different. Alice, the middle one, asks us much more than the other two and seems to have a genuine understanding of what I had lived through. Once when we were together in Stockholm, my wife suggested that we go see *Schindler's List.* And Alice said, "Oh no, Mom, that won't be very good for Dad, it will hurt him." So we didn't go.

My guess would be that you would not particularly want to tell your story to them, unless they asked you?

ROSSMANN: I think that's right. Only Alice so far.

How important is religion to your life?

ROSSMANN: I would say that my approach to life has always been more rational than mystical.

Never have had any Damascus Road experience?

ROSSMANN: No. But one of the aspects of Quakerism in which I believe is the concept of God in everyone. This I translate to mean that there is good in every person, and you should strive to bring that out.

So there's a natural religion?

ROSSMANN: Yes.

Earlier you mentioned The Diary of Anne Frank. *Do you agree with her conclusion that somehow all people are good at heart?*

ROSSMANN: That's certainly a Quaker point of view. In the thirties some English Quakers went to talk to Adolf Hitler; they believed that there was something good, something of God, in everybody. But, of course, their attempts to persuade Hitler to be more humane didn't succeed. But that's the sort of attitude Anne Frank has in her diary.

How do you feel about that? If your mother had stayed in Germany, it would have been unfortunate. To put it mildly.

ROSSMANN: It would have cost her her life. But I find this very difficult to answer. Part of the Quaker teaching is to be pacifist, not to fight, and I can tell you

many anecdotes that the Quakers tell to extol the pacifist approach in difficult situations. I would agree that this was the right way, but I don't think approaching Hitler this way was likely to succeed.

Was this pacifism something that kept you from complaining to your mother about the harassment that you had received?

ROSSMANN: I don't think so. I just couldn't tell my mother that this was happening. I can't fully explain it.

Anything to do with a religious conviction? A faith in God?

ROSSMANN: When I was at Saffron Walden Friends School, I went around asking very seriously, "Is there a God and what does God mean?" For a long time I made myself a nuisance, disturbing my teachers because of my questions. But that is my nature. I tend to question everything. Nothing is ever simple to me. I think I would have done that under any circumstances.

Ever feel any personal association with the figure of Jesus?

ROSSMANN: Christ never played a significant part in my thinking. I was never sure my interpretations of the New Testament were correct, but I continued to take it in the sense of being kind to people, working to bringing out their best.

The Sermon on the Mount?

ROSSMANN: Yes, maybe that's my mother's influence. I am much like my mother in character. Very similar in many ways. My mother indoctrinated me with the basic humanitarian values of Quakerism. I appreciate these very much and always have.

What about the lessons learned from your experience?

ROSSMANN: Well, you know, I don't think things entirely die out with your generation. Values and attitudes get passed down.

The Bible says the sins of the father are passed on to the seventh generation. What if your children were to come and ask you to tell them about your personal values, what would you say?

ROSSMANN: I suspect they probably wouldn't ask quite as searching questions as you do. But I would tell them to try and discover the good qualities of individuals.

What do you feel is the role of government in creating a good society?

ROSSMANN: Oh, my.

Well, you've been a victim of government-created ideal society.

ROSSMANN: There probably is no such thing as a perfect government, "perfect" cannot be because society is, after all, made up of different people, and different people have different ideas. So government in a sense can be only a lowest common denominator.

Certainly you believe in more than that. You certainly believe in a strong role for the government in education, and that's not the lowest common denominator, because you would then only be educating "the masses," whoever they might be. Education is also for the elite. You can have universal suffrage, but laws are not made or passed by "everybody."

ROSSMANN: True. In England, the laws on compulsory education were indeed passed at a time when there wasn't universal suffrage. The more educated part of the population forced these laws on a part of society that did not have any say in the matter. Improvements do not always come about because of democracy.

How do you feel about the responsibility of government in this respect today?

ROSSMANN: It should work for good. For example, I applaud strong government action in the area of civil rights. It is unacceptable to discriminate against anybody on the basis of race or religion in job applications, housing, and so on. And my children and their children are free from that. I don't think they will ever have this feeling of being outsiders in terms of race or religion or speech in any way, and that makes me very happy.

Assuming they will someday read these words, what else would you like them to know?

ROSSMANN: I haven't exactly thought about it. That's a very difficult thing, I don't know if I can answer that, what advice I would pass on to my children, to my grandchildren. I don't know. I might say let's go and get the tapes of these conversations. They will probably tell more about my history now than anything else.

Some Transcendental Way: Joseph Haberer

"Throughout my life, I have always been amazed at the enormous capacity of people to recuperate from great injury, and the enormous potential that people have to realize their better self, their ability to live full rich lives in decent relationships with others."

Michael Golomb's visas to travel through France and Switzerland in 1939.

Walter Hirsch in his U.S. Army uniform.

Michael Rossmann in England when he was an instructor at the Royal Technical College.

Russia
Theresienstadt
Prague
Bohemia
Olmütz
Brünn
Moravia
Germany
Galicia
Krakow
Przeworsk
Stanislav
Braunau
Linz
Gmunden
Salzburg
Altausee
Vienna
Innsbruck
Austria
Tyrol
Budapest
Hungary
Transylvania
Switzerland
Trieste
Croatia
Romania
Italy
Bosnia
Serbia
AUSTRIA - HUNGARY
1914

most of the resources of the former empire, the new country's industrial plant could produce only a fraction of its previous output. Unemployment payments and the general costs of recovery caused government expenses to skyrocket. The state tried to meet its obligations by devaluing its money, thereby worsening an already dangerous inflation. Trade unions demanded constant salary readjustments to keep wages in step with prices. In August 1922, with the Krone worth less than 2 percent of the money's prewar gold value, the government appealed to the Allied Powers for a loan of $70 million. The request was referred to the League of Nations, which promised to sponsor the necessary loans, provided a special high commissioner be appointed to direct Austrian finances and carry out a program of economic reform. Not until 1926 was the period of foreign stewardship ended. The temporary loss of sovereignty, though, compounded the country's prevailing political confusion and division, isolation, and national weakness.

Reduced Circumstances: Anna Mandler Frost Akeley

"We had rococo, Maria Theresa–style furniture, inlaid with marquetry, and the chairs were covered in embroidered silk cloth."

An Elegant District and a Well-Dressed Wife

Paul Mandler married well. His wife, Emma Löw-Beer, had a dowry that included a large apartment house in Vienna's historic First District on the Salztorgasse,[1] a large chunk of Nordbahn Gesellschaft (North Railroad Company), stocks, and various other liquid assets. Ten years younger than her husband, she had been born in Brünn (Brno) in 1869, into a family of Moravian "textile barons," whose factories were scattered across the Austro-Hungarian Empire's northern crown lands. She spoke German, French, Czech, and English fluently and could read and make herself understood in Italian and Spanish. She was an accomplished pianist. One of her early classmates was Arnold Schönberg.

The cultural richness of Vienna proved irresistible to the Löw-Beers, as it did to many of these wealthy Jews from the Bohemian

and Moravian territories, and they tried to spend as much time there as possible. This strong German-Austrian cultural identity usually came at the expense of their Jewish identity and the maintenance of traditional religious beliefs. The Löw-Beers, for example, contributed to various Jewish causes and charities, but did not go to synagogue or keep kosher.

Emma married Paul Mandler in 1892. Mandler's background was less impressive than his wife's. Although born in Vienna, he had not come from an old or rich Viennese family. (Most of the city's Jews had arrived only after 1848, when the residence prohibitions had been dropped.) His background was lower middle class, his father being a tradesman, but he was determined to succeed, and he invested his wife's dowry wisely, becoming a partner in a company that manufactured men's underwear and hosiery. Within a decade, this company became one of the largest concerns of its kind, with a contract to supply socks to the entire Austrian army.

The Mandlers had three children: Auguste, born in 1894; Kurt, born in 1901; and Anna, born in 1904. The Mandlers ran their lives and raised their children in the grand bourgeois style befitting the circles in which they traveled. Their household had a staff of five: a cook, a chauffeur, a first-floor maid, a second-floor maid, and a French governess. They also owned a villa at Altaussee, a small resort village about forty miles southeast of Salzburg.

ANNA AKELEY: An Austrian Jewish businessman had to be very careful that he lived in an elegant district, that his wife was very well dressed, that his children went to first-rate schools, and that his wife had the correct jewelry on every day. She would wear pearls before 5 P. M. and diamonds after 5 P.M.—those were the rules, because if people saw a Jew that didn't dress his wife well or allow her to dress well and the children were not sent to very good, high-class schools, he could not get a loan from a bank or from more wealthy Jews. You never went to a Jewish moneylender, because only the lowest classes went to moneylenders.

Those Jews who wanted to fit in and who wanted to make it had to behave like genuine Austrians?

AKELEY: That's right. It was absolutely necessary to behave the same way. The children of the wealthy were usually born at home, and I, my sister, and my brother were all born at home. The doctor and the midwife both came to the house. In my case, the midwife did most of the work while the doctor sat in a

nice chair and smoked cigars and drank coffee and had to be served. But he got about ten times more pay. My mother never breast-fed her children. A lady did not do that. I had a wet nurse who came from Olmütz (Olomouc), a town known for its supply of wet nurses. Mine got beer every night, because that produces more milk. I don't know if she also breast fed her own child.

We occupied two of the eight apartments in that building, and at Christmas time we would all assemble in the grand salon of our quarters. In this large room with high ceilings there stood an enormous Christmas tree that my mother had decorated. It was very beautiful. Our presents were underneath. The servants got envelopes containing money. They lined up, and my mother played "Silent Night, Holy Night" on the piano, and the servants sang. Then the envelopes were passed out. The servants took them and came up to us and we shook hands and said, "Happy Christmas." Only after that were we allowed to get our own presents.

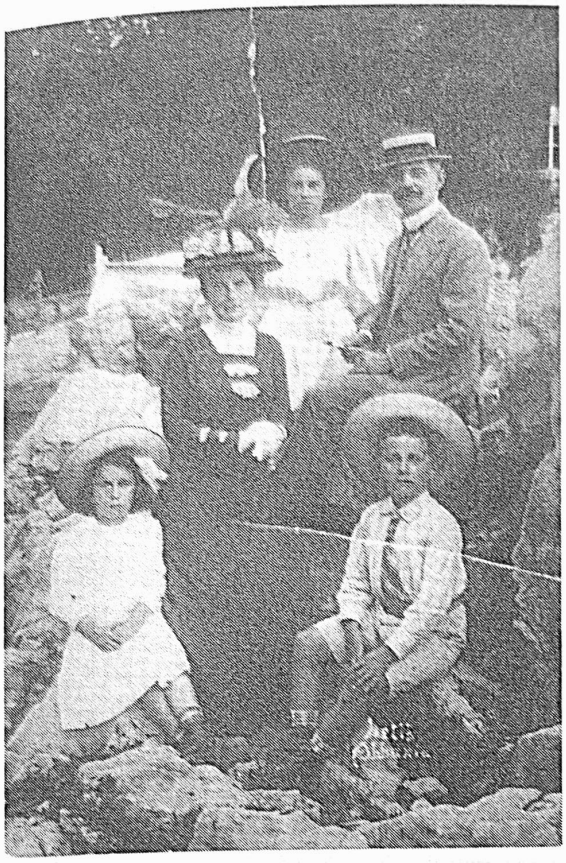
Did you celebrate Hanukkah?

AKELEY: No, never. Nobody went to synagogue. But we had to be very careful that the five servants, who were all Catholics, could go to High Mass at St. Stephen's Cathedral on Sunday at 11:00. That meant that Sunday dinner was late. We also had fish on Friday.

Did you ever have a seder at home?

AKELEY: My father told me that sometimes they used to celebrate that in his home, but I had never seen one before I came to this country, when I was invited by one of my friends. My mother insisted that we know what Passover means, and she told us the story. And we were not allowed to go to school on Yom Kippur. My father insisted that my brother become bar mitzvah. My father gave a large amount of money to B'nai B'rith, an organization he once served as president. He was also involved with a scheme to finance Jewish emigration.

I found this out by eavesdropping on one of my father's meetings. I must have been eight years old. I saw men come into the big entrance hall, and I ran around into another room so I could hear what they would say. I recognized some of them from having come to our house before. I'm not quite sure how many there were, perhaps ten. And they sat around that very long dining room table. And they were talking about helping the Jews get to Palestine. Something that Theodor Herzl advocated. My father and some others said that Palestine was too small and what they should do was buy land in Canada. And I heard them talk of millions and millions of Kronen. I remember my father saying,



The Mandler family,
July 1914. Anna Mandler
Akeley is seated on the left.

The Mandler family home on the Vegagasse, where Anna Akeley grew up in a privileged environment.

"This place is nearly as large as Austria. And there the Jews can be settled. One can grow enough wheat in Canada to feed the whole world and earn much money." And there were others who disagreed, "The Jews don't belong in Canada. It has a horrible climate. They belong in Israel." So there were those two sides. And they fought. And I remember that the vote was about six to four in favor of Palestine. And my father hit his hand on the table and said, "It's hopeless with Palestine, it is too small."

I didn't understand what they were talking about because I thought, "Why should the Jews go away anyhow? Why should they go to a place called Palestine or Canada if they can stay in Vienna?" It didn't make sense to me. I asked my mother, and she explained to me what Jerusalem meant to the Jews. She was very careful to explain the whole thing to me without saying that the Jews were persecuted, because I asked, "Why do they want to go away? It's so nice in the Alps. We can go skiing and you said that in Palestine you can't go skiing." I mean, that was the answer of a little girl.

Did you parents have a good marriage?

AKELEY: I think it was quite a good marriage. My father admired my mother's elegance; she was very well educated, and he liked to learn things from her. She used to read Balzac and Voltaire, and Goethe and Schiller and Grillparzer—the whole caboodle. And one afternoon a month, she had a *jour,* an open house for other ladies who came for tea. Every woman had a thing like that, a *jour,* a special day, her special day. We had rococo, Maria Theresa–style furniture, inlaid with marquetry, and the chairs were covered in embroidered silk cloth: there was even embroidered silk on the walls. And here came the women with those corsets. I was naturally not invited, but I did a lot of spying.

What activities did you have outside the home?

AKELEY: Once a year just before World War I we went to an audience of the Emperor [Francis Joseph]. In 1912, my father got the title of *Kaiserlicher Rat,* which gave him the right to be received at court.

In order to get this title, something he had wanted his whole life, Paul Mandler had to agree to be baptized a Christian. He never considered that he was not a Jew, however, and continued to support Jewish causes. He arranged that a rabbi give special lessons to his son for a successful bar mitzvah. Conversion for Paul was not a

religious question. It was a formality, a business transaction, a necessity for reception at court, a stepping-stone to honor as Herr Kaiserlicher Rat (The Honorable Advisor to the Emperor). Only people like the already titled Rothschilds could be received at court and still remain Jews. Paul Mandler, his wife, and his daughter Anna were baptized. But Anna never considered herself a Christian, nor was she Jewish in matters of religion. She would grow up believing that religion was prompted by a fear of the unknown, and that there was no life after death. In the dynamic assimilationist world of upper-class Viennese Jewry, questions of religion, tradition, and identity were, like salami, sliced thickly or thinly according to individual taste. In the Mandler family, religion was for the servants.

Were you included when your parents were received by the emperor?

AKELEY: I did it twice. My mother—who hated it, by the way—said that I should see it at least once to see how ridiculous it was. My father had to bow until he saw the hand of the emperor. My mother had to go way down in a curtsy, keeping her back very straight. It was difficult, considering the tight corsets. Next to the emperor stood an officer who held out his hand to get the ladies up. Naturally, for me and my sister, going down and up was easy. I knew I wasn't supposed to laugh, but it seemed hilarious. I saw it twice because I begged to go the second time.

I also curtsied to my parents. I didn't say "good morning" or "good evening" when I would leave them; I would have to make a little curtsy and say, "I kiss your hand." In our house we were treated very nicely, but not with loving embraces. My mother sometimes made us put our hands behind our backs when we kissed her because she did not want us to get her clothes dirty, and my father was suffering from tuberculosis, so he only kissed us on the back of our necks. But here comes the story that I like best:

One Sunday morning my father said to me, "Come on, you little monkey. I'll take you in the car to a park where there is a concert." There were always concerts on Sunday. Vienna had two big parks—the Stadtpark (city park) and the Volksgarten (the people's garden). At the Stadtpark they played classical music: Paganini, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Schumann. But not Brahms, Brahms was considered too modern. At the Volksgarten they played musicals, operetta-type music with the popular songs. My father would have loved to go to the concert where they played musicals, but he said we shouldn't be seen there. And I said, "But Papa, why can't we go?" And he replied, "You will not

understand. We have to go to the one where they play classical music." He never explained why. But one Sunday, he said to me, "I don't want you to be dressed up in your Sunday things, and I'm just going to go without a hat." And we went to the Volksgarten. He sang along with the orchestra and was so happy there.

Did your mother look down on your father because of his social background?

AKELEY: Probably.

Why, then, did she marry him?

AKELEY: Because she was twenty-two and at that time an old maid was a terrible thing to be.

But certainly there were other eligible bachelors. She did have a lot of assets.

AKELEY: Probably there were others. But he was quite attractive, and she was not religious. And it had to be a Jew. A non-Jew was out of the question.

A World Transformed

Despite the declaration of war in 1914, Paul Mandler still contemplated a promising future for his children. He wanted his oldest daughter, Auguste, to marry an aristocrat, perhaps a baron, or at least somebody with a "von." Such a match could easily be arranged; many nobles had more impressive names than family fortunes. To make sure his son Kurt would be a success, he employed the services of a *Hofmeister,* a special tutor to teach the young man courtly grace. His youngest daughter, Anna, had a French governess, spoke the language fluently by the age of four, received special instruction in swimming, fencing (with Italian foils), gymnastics, and skiing. She went to a Protestant finishing school, where the girls wore special uniforms with little white aprons and little black ties. Mandler expected all of his children to excel in school. Once when Anna brought home a C in geography, she was threatened with having a special tutor. The prospect was so humiliating, considering that other students might find out, that Anna soon improved her grade.

AKELEY: I was ten years old when the war began, and naturally, I had no understanding of what such an undertaking involved. I do remember, though, during the war we moved to the suburbs to a rather elegant villa in the Nineteenth

Döbling (Cottage District) on the Vegagasse. (We lived there until the Nazis forced us out in 1938.) The property had its own garden. We left our city house because my parents wanted to get away from the thousands of Polish Jews who had fled to Vienna when the Russians invaded Galicia in 1916. Many of these were very poor Jews who settled in the Second District, which was just across the Danube canal from where we lived. My parents decided that we could not live there anymore next to those messy and dirty Polish Jews with their *payos* [the side curls and hair locks typical of Orthodox Hasidic Jews from Eastern Europe]. We still owned the old house in the First District but rented it out.

I was taken out of that private girls' school and enrolled in a public Gymnasium, the Schwartzwaldschule named after the director. I don't think it exists any more, although I believe there is another school that now bears the same name. When you registered your child into that school, you had to bring your income tax return, and you paid tuition according to how much you earned, so the wealthy helped subsidize those who were poorer. It was a very good school. Most of the teachers had doctor's degrees. Oscar Kokoschka, the painter, was our instructor in art. (I went to a three-month summer camp. Rudolf Serkin was one of the campers and he used to play the grand piano in the evenings and tell me not to bother him. "Go away, fat Anni," he'd say.)

The first day I came to that Schwartzwaldschule, I wore the uniform from my old private school—you know, navy skirt, navy blouse, a little white apron, red silk stockings and high button shoes—and they howled with laughter and called me a "robber baron," after those nobles who used to storm down from their mountain castles and rob the merchants. And I came home in tears and I said, "I will not stay in that school. Everybody makes fun of me." And my mother was very nice, and said, "What do the other kids wear?" Well, I said, "They have skirts and blouses on of different colors, but nobody dresses in a navy uniform." So my mother had some new clothes made for me, and when I went back to school the next day, nobody cared. I was not funny anymore.

That must have been a great comedown, going to a school that was more democratic?

AKELEY: It was a new world. One of my friends was Franzi Dreyer; she was a carpenter's daughter and sat next to me in class. And once I invited her over to my house for tea. We sat in the living room and were served by the maid. Then she invited me over to her house. It was out in the Seventeenth District, the working-class quarter, and she lived on the fourth floor of a drab apartment building without an elevator. The first room we went in was the kitchen, and the kitchen had

no running water. And then she brought me into a larger room with two beds. In one corner was a palm tree and two or three chairs. And she said, "This is my parents' bedroom and also our living room." Naturally, I didn't show how astonished I was, but it was the first time that I had seen anything like that.

In school there was a new way of teaching. We had a girls-only class called "human reproduction." Our teacher was a wonderful woman, Doctor Teleki, and she told us that most mammals reproduce in the same way and showed us slides of the anatomy of men and women and explained what happens. When she was finished, she asked if there were any questions. Most of the girls in the class seemed to already know about that, but I said, "I would like to make a statement. My parents would never have done a thing like that." And that brought me down again, the howls of laughter. And Dr. Teleki said, "I do not permit any laughing here. If someone doesn't know something, she has to learn it and not be laughed at." And then she said to me, "I'm not going to take the time now. I will wait in the main office, and after class you come to me."

When I did, she said, "You know, the nice part of it is that these people love each other. And therefore something which you seem not to be able to accept becomes something very nice. It is one of the most intimate things." I asked, "Does one have to be married?" and she said, "No, but it is better if you are married."

This is 1917 and you're thirteen. Sex education for thirteen-year-olds at that time is very progressive. Even today in parts of the United States it would be considered controversial. Such liberalism is something you usually don't associate with Austro-Hungarian society, which was supposed to be so very prim and proper and restrained in such matters.

What about your other studies? What were you learning about the war, for example?

AKELEY: Herr Rommel, our history professor, did not want to discuss the war. He said that we did not know enough about the situation in the monarchy to discuss it, and therefore the war was not going to be discussed in his class.

What was this school teaching you about citizenship?

AKELEY: That the state and government protects you and offers you all kinds of opportunities, and therefore it was your duty to repay what the government, the state, or the city offers you by giving the state and the government your loyalty.

What did this school teach you about social classes?

AKELEY: Nothing.

How about religious tolerance and ethnic differences?

AKELEY: The Catholic religion was, of course, the state religion, but by law everybody got religious instruction. A Jesuit taught the Catholics, a Calvinist or Lutheran minister the Protestants, and a rabbi taught us. We had Rabbi Fuchs. He was very funny, and I got a bad grade.

Did you learn about other religions?

AKELEY: We did not speak in the Jewish class about other religions. It was not done. After the war, when the Social Democrats took over, religious instruction was dropped completely.

What impact did this religious education have upon you?

AKELEY: I don't remember much. But when I went to the university, I wanted to major in comparative philosophy of religion.

To what extent was the school trying to create an Austro-Hungarian identity that would transcend the empire's different peoples?

AKELEY: There was an attempt to make everybody speak German.

Did the school try to teach that everybody was equal, or that some were more equal than others?

AKELEY: That some are more equal than others.

Were you ever made to feel that you were less than a citizen because you came from a Jewish family?

AKELEY: In school they punished you heavily if they saw any discrimination. Right away you were not admitted to any of the school's social events.

But outside school there were certain organizations that would not admit Jews. My father would have paid anything to get into the Jockey Club. It was a most elegant club. But he never could make it. Then there was the Alpenverein [Alpine Society]. It did fantastic things, like constructing trails through the mountains, grading them according to the degree of difficulty, and erecting a network of sleeping lodges. You could not be a member of the Alpenverein if you were Jewish. That exclusion continued even after the war. Officially they could not refuse you, but they could make it impossible for you.

Was there discrimination among the Jews themselves?

AKELEY: The Jews who had lived in Vienna for several generations were very antagonistic toward those hundreds of thousands of very poor, very uneducated Jews who had fled from Austrian Poland to Vienna in 1916. They treated them as social outcasts.

Would you say that there was more of a difference, perceived or otherwise, between the Viennese-born Jews and the Polish Jews than between the Viennese Jews and the Austrian Catholics?

AKELEY: The difference was unbelievable. The customs of the Eastern Jews were completely different. The Viennese Jews were not accustomed to seeing the way they dressed and found them extremely dirty. In Vienna in the summer it goes sometimes up to eighty degrees Fahrenheit, and despite the heat, the men wore those long black coats with black hats and *payos*. They, of course, sweated terribly, and there were no antiperspirants at that time. In the treatment of the Polish Jews I experienced discrimination for the first time, but it was more a question of social class than race. The old Jewish families in Vienna felt threatened because the Polish Jews ruined the relationship between the Jews and the Viennese.

For the young Adolf Hitler, living in Vienna from 1907 to 1913, racial considerations, of course, came first. The future Führer was especially jarred by the cultural differences between the westernized Viennese bourgeoisie and the kind of Jews of whom Akeley speaks. Hitler came to regard Vienna as "the embodiment of racial desecration." He wrote of his revulsion of the city's conglomeration of races, especially the proliferation of its Jews.

With the exception of the Alpenverein and the fact that your father couldn't get into the Jockey Club, was the atmosphere in which the old Viennese Jewish families operated fairly protected from antisemitism?

AKELEY: At least openly. I was not aware of antisemitism before my parents warned me about it. They told me that Gentiles here of the same social level sometimes did not associate with Jews. I knew a little bit already, because in school I went out socially with a mixed group and was not invited to some events, like St. Nicholas Day, where there were no Jews. And the older I got, the more sensitive I became. We were very careful not to have people of only one religion at our home when we entertained. Sometimes, though, when my sister entertained her friends, it happened that many more Jews were invited. Sometimes not. It de-

pended. But it was considered very low-class to invite people of only one religion. One had to show that religion was irrelevant in social life. But one of those Gentile guys we knew once asked me, "Anni, am I the honor *goy?*" The honor *goy* was the one who was there so the whole thing would not be only Jewish.

Did any of your Jewish friends marry non-Jews?

AKELEY: A lot. There was intermarriage already in my older sister's time, although not among the blue-collar classes.

In what religion would the children be raised?

AKELEY: Well, I cannot tell you too much about my generation because of Hitler. But among my sister's contemporaries, the children all became Christian. Many of these families, though, celebrated both Easter and Passover, and for Christmas got Hanukkah and Christmas presents.

So the kind of society you were in then was assimilating?

AKELEY: The Viennese had an old expression that garlic and incense go very well together.

How did you feel about the war? Were you a patriot? Did you want the Germans and the Austrians to win?

AKELEY: I just wanted one thing—I wanted it to end. I couldn't stand seeing blind soldiers being led around on the streets. When I went to school, I had to take the streetcar to the First District. And when wounded soldiers got on, people would give them their seats. I felt so horrible, and a kind of desperation overtook me. When the Russians advanced into Austrian Poland, people feared that they would come all the way to Vienna.

During the opening months of the war the Russian army had captured most of Galicia; an Austro-German counteroffensive in the spring of the following year, however, had recaptured most of this lost territory and pushed the enemy armies back into their own country. In June 1916, however, General Alexei Brusilov avenged the previous year's losses by launching a massive attack into Poland and Galicia along a 200-mile front, from the Pripet marshes to Bukovina. By the first week of August, the Russians had captured Stanislau in Eastern Galicia, touching off popular hysteria that they

might soon reach Vienna. Although exaggerated, such fear did not seem unreasonable then. General Max Hoffmann, who was directing the German forces in Galicia, complained about the worth of his allies: the armchair Austrian staff officers and their polyglot soldiery speaking twenty-three languages, no nationality being able to understand the other.

AKELEY: My mother said, "The Russians will burn our house and they will burn us," and she couldn't sleep and walked around half the night. She went to a psychiatrist, who said she had "agitated depression," an affliction that her mother and brother had also suffered from. Both of them had committed suicide.

The situation was made worse by the lack of heat and food. The last winter of the war our rooms were about fifty degrees Fahrenheit. We sat around a little iron stove to keep warm. And because there were no vegetables, I suffered from scurvy. My teeth became loose. And the doctor told us to gather all the grass and leaves in our garden, chop them up, put salt and vinegar on them, and eat them uncooked three times a day. "If your stomach gets upset, take some antacids." After three weeks of that I actually got better. There was only one trouble: we had a large dog: and he could no longer have free run of the yard! We also got some food from some farmers in the country. Perhaps eggs or maybe a chicken, which my mother always shared with the servants. There was also some corn, not the hybrid corn we have in Indiana. We had to boil that corn about an hour before we could eat it. We also ate the cobs. We put them through a meat grinder, mixed them with yeast, salt, and water and made this into a horrible-tasting bread. We naturally had no coffee or tea. There was a substitute, *Ersatz* was the word for it.

It seems your lifestyle then would depress anybody who was accustomed, as you were, to a life of privilege.

AKELEY: My mother got well after a few months, but she had fits of depression throughout the rest of her life. Because of that, she died in the Holocaust instead of coming here.

Did any members of your family serve in the Austrian armed forces?

AKELEY: Yes, I had two cousins by the name of Deutsch and one cousin named Kuffler who served. And my sister was a nurse. As soon as the war broke out, she went to the hospital and volunteered. She took a course and within six months passed the exam. She eventually became head nurse of one of the big Vienna hospitals. She naturally did not take the money from her nursing.

My father did not live to see the end of the war. Cancer of the tongue com-

pounded the tuberculosis from which he had suffered all his life. Just before he died in January 1918, he was in great agony and made such noise that I prayed that it would stop. I couldn't stand listening to my father in such pain. He got massive doses of narcotics, but they were not enough. He left most of his assets to my mother.

An End to Patriotism

After a series of preparatory strikes in August and early September 1918, Allied Generalissimo Ferdinand Foch ordered an all-out offensive that methodically forced the German army back toward the Rhine. Meanwhile the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was breaking apart in great pieces. Even since the beginning of the year, when a series of strikes swept the empire, the Habsburg regime had to rely almost exclusively on the military to maintain order. As the inevitability of German defeat became clear, the hope of keeping the empire together faded. In a last desperate attempt to save his dynasty, Emperor Charles, who had succeeded his uncle Francis Joseph two years before, advocated changing the Dual Monarchy into a federated monarchy. His manifesto, dated October 16, 1918, informed the empire's main national groups that they could exercise home rule through their own local assemblies. The promise came too late to have much effect. But Charles could not bring himself to abdicate. His family had been sovereigns since the thirteenth century. Shortly after midday on November 11, he signed a proclamation "removing himself from all affairs of state" and for the next five months lived on his estates northeast of Vienna before he finally fled to Switzerland.

AKELEY: In the two years following the end of the war, the Krone lost about 80 percent of its value. In 1920, it was officially devalued and replaced with the Schilling at a rate of 10,000 to one. When that happened, my mother came to me and said, "We are not poor, but we are no longer well-to-do. We can only have one servant now. You will have to do your own things, take care of your clothes." We moved to the second floor of our house and rented out the whole downstairs. That's how we were able to stay there.

The postwar inflation, in many ways, wiped you out.

AKELEY: Almost completely. It was a complete comedown. And I asked, "Can't I go skiing anymore?" And she just looked at me and laughed. You know, I was

so innocent about money. Money was always there. But I was able to continue at the Gymnasium and get my *Matura,* passing with "unanimous consent."[2]

I began studies at the university in comparative philosophy of religion. My mother agreed to pay for my studies if I also studied something that would earn me a living, because there was no money for a dowry. So I decided on something that had to do with my skiing.

When the ski trains came back on Sunday evening, at the station was an X-ray machine and a doctor who would see whether those injured on the slopes had any broken bones. I had once torn two tendons in my leg, and he was able to tell that I should be sent home rather than to a hospital. I was so impressed that I wanted to study that.

Were many women getting a higher education at that time?

AKELEY: The medical school of the University of Vienna had many women. There were already quite a few women physicians.

Isn't that rather unusual?

AKELEY: Not for Vienna, which had the best medical school in Europe.

You obviously were expected to get good grades and go to the university. But did your parents want you to be educated for the sake of education or to be educated for the sake of having a profession and getting a job?

AKELEY: As long as my father lived and we were so well-to-do, the idea of a career came into nobody's head. Earning money came after my father had died, and we became what my mother called "poor," which wasn't exactly true.

You were eighteen in 1922. Was that the year you went to the university?

AKELEY: I had graduated from the Gymnasium in June and entered the university in September. I also attended the Roentgen Institute of Vienna.

My classes at the university lasted until three o'clock in the afternoon. I took Semitic languages, a course entitled "What Is Philosophy?" and a course about Christianity and Judaism. At 5 o'clock every day I went to the Roentgen Institute, where I studied physics; I had a course in statistics and one in differential equations. I was loaded with work.

My classes ended at 9 o'clock, and then I had to take the streetcar out to where we lived there in the suburbs. Sometimes I would not go directly home, but stop first at a coffeehouse, and I might get home by 11. I studied in the morning between classes.

Akeley did not take a straight path to her degree. After a year she broke off her academic studies to work at the Norbertus Verlag, a publishing house, where she typed, took shorthand (an aptitude she taught herself), and was a translator of French. When she returned to her studies, it was only to those at the Roentgen Institute. Her research and full-time coursework so monopolized her time that she abandoned her study of comparative religion at the university. In 1925, she graduated from the Roentgen Institute with the equivalent of a master's degree.[3] She returned to the Norbertus Verlag, rising to the rank of editor-in-chief. She stayed in that job until 1938, when the Nazis confiscated the firm because the owner was Jewish, and Akeley would be enlisted to participate in the process of liquidation.

Akeley had not been particularly interested in politics until 1933, when the Reichstag in Berlin was burned. Whether the Nazis set it on fire is still subject to controversy, but what is certain is that Hitler used the arson as an excuse to consolidate his power by having the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State passed. The resulting suspension of civil liberties was followed by the notorious Enabling Law, which gave Hitler the power to legislate on his own authority and carry out the nazification of German institutions and society. Nazi destruction of German democracy and the subsequent racial laws encouraged the consolidation of dictatorial government and an increase of antisemitism throughout Central Europe.

AKELEY: I became more and more interested in what was happening in Germany. Until 1933 I had little time for politics. I did my work, went skiing, and discussed with my friends how Marlene Dietrich looked in *The Blue Angel* or what Max Reinhardt[4] was producing in the theater. We also discussed Freud, and I even learned the difference between Freud, Jung, and Adler.

After Hitler came to power, those of us who were Jewish became very concerned and worried. We were no longer lighthearted kids—or, more precisely—young people in a world of kids. People would now ask, "What will you do when Hitler comes?" One might answer, "I will go to America," or "I will go to Africa," or "I will go to Australia." I remember people saying, "That is the end of us, because if they can do that in Germany, which has 65 million people, they can do it to Austria, with only six and a half million people." We never met in coffeehouses anymore, but at each other's homes as antisemitism grew by leaps and bounds.

I remember one incident quite clearly. I belonged to a mountaineering group. And in the autumn of 1933 we went to Styria to walk on one of the small glaciers. We would climb for about five hours to get there and stay overnight in one of the Alpenverein huts. When we got to the hut, my heart sank. On the door was a sign which said: "Juden sind nicht erwünscht hier" (Jews are not welcomed here). Our group had both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were shocked; the Gentiles embarrassed. At that moment a sort of desperation overtook me. I knew about antisemitism, I had even seen some of it at the university when Gentiles didn't want Jews to eat at their tables in the student cafeteria, but the sign came as a complete surprise. We didn't stay in that hut but went over the glacier to another place that didn't belong to the Alpenverein. During the night I started to feel very funny, and when I took my pulse it was 160. I thought I was going to die. Anyhow, next day, we went back down.

I saw a doctor; he gave me bromides, and I was better after two days. From that moment on I looked everywhere, I listened to what people said. I never had been suspicious before, but from that moment on, I paid attention. I never went up any mountain where the Alpenverein had huts.

But you knew before that the Alpenverein did not want Jews to use their huts.

AKELEY: But they wouldn't have it written, you see. My parents had warned me that I might encounter antisemitism where I least expected it.

You were determined not to allow yourself to be put in this position again, right?

AKELEY: Correct, and I was terribly hurt.

Did you sense that the Austrian Catholic Church was antisemitic?

AKELEY: Never officially. I remember that one church paper came out and said that the Jews were the killers of Christ, but the Vatican corrected the newspaper, saying that the Romans killed Christ.

Your friends seemed to fear that the advent of Hitler to power and the end of Austrian democracy were going to result in a German attack on Austria.

AKELEY: Absolutely.

Did you consider yourself an Austrian patriot?

AKELEY: No longer, when I was being discriminated against.

This was more than legal discrimination, it was particular organizations simply saying: "Jews not wanted." And that was difficult because most Austrian Jews considered themselves Austrians, didn't they?

AKELEY: Very much. It was our home. I was very proud to be fourth-generation Viennese.

Your loyalty was to Vienna rather than to the state?

AKELEY: But we also had the Alps. Although they had no social connection, they were lovely. The loveliness of Austria is unbelievable. You could walk up into the Alps and find a village next to the glacier. Here there is nothing like that.

You have a loyalty, an attachment to the beauty of the country.

AKELEY: Definitely, I had a great attachment.

To you it's a Heimat?

AKELEY: Not anymore.

But then?

AKELEY: Oh, absolutely. You know, I had a *Heimat* and my *Heimat* was Österreich. But I always used to proudly claim that I was a Wienerin, a Viennese. But after they kicked me out, I never said that anymore.

Even before, though, you didn't feel any sense of nationalism?

AKELEY: I had no sense of nationalism. Nationalism wasn't particularly stressed, even in Habsburg times. In our history classes we always learned that the Austrians lost wars. There was a famous saying that "We Austrians marry instead of fight." In fact, the empire got most of its lands by marrying instead of fighting, because they were not good fighters.

But you had roots, you felt you had roots.

AKELEY: Absolutely, my roots were Austrian.

You said that many of your friends felt that Austria's days were numbered. Did many of them leave?

AKELEY: Not many.

Didn't they fear that there was going to be an Anschluss?

AKELEY: Yes, but they thought they could live with it. It would be very disagreeable, a great inconvenience, but they could put up with the restrictions. They were too much attached to the *Heimatland.* And where would you go? To get to the United States you had to have a sponsor. Even those who had relatives in America hung on. They asked their relatives if they could count on them if a time came.

Did you or anyone in your circle come in contact with the Zionist movement?

AKELEY: We knew about it, of course, and we thought that if the Jews thought they came from Palestine and wanted to go, it would be a very good thing. But for us it had no attraction. We had good jobs and were making enough money to enjoy life. We were told that only date trees, camels, and nomadic Arabs lived there. The Polish Jews were more willing to go to Palestine than the old Viennese Jews, who wanted to stay where they were.

An Outlet for Misery: Henry Feuer

"I was alarmed at the tremendous class differences, the poor people, the unemployment. I felt that all this misery had to find an outlet, and that's the reason that people wanted to join Germany."

The Flight from Galicia

The Russian offensive into central Galicia, which began on August 18, 1914, two weeks after the start of World War I, caught the Austrians off guard. Conrad von Hötzendorf, chief of the Dual Monarchy's General Staff, had expected the attack farther north, near the Warsaw-bulge sector. However, the Austrians put up a spirited defense, especially around Komarov. But in doing so, they exposed their southern flank to encirclement and had to withdraw, leaving Galicia open to Russian occupation. The citizens panicked.

Many Jews, knowing the Russian appetite for pogroms, took to the roads in flight.[5] When units of the Russian 8th Army entered Stanislau on August 25, many had left, including the Feuer family, which had fled to Vienna. They thus abandoned the family dried fruit and fur business, arriving only with the clothes they wore and the horsedrawn carriage that made their flight possible. Henry's

Anna Akeley in 1924.

This *Heimatschein,* issued in 1930, confirms Anna Mandler Frost's rights as a citizen and resident of Vienna.

Henry Feuer's passport.

The Earth Is Round: Anna Mandler Akeley

"And when Hitler spoke of the Ostmark, they suddenly felt, 'My golly! We will be somebody.'"

Getting Rid of Jewish Influence

Many well-to-do Viennese Jews indeed had difficulty understanding the visceral, all-encompassing, no-holds-barred racism of the Nazis, which was more than excluding Jews from certain tony clubs. Some *Österreichjuden* found it wishful to believe that Hitler's persecution of the "good" Jews, those had lived in Austria for generations, would cease as soon as he realized that the *Ostjuden* were the real target. Failure to see immanent doom in the tea leaves of the future was especially true for those who had led a comfortable existence amid the baroque splendor, the intellectual fervor, and the Sachertorte brio of the Austrian capital.

ANNA AKELEY: The paper sellers shouted, "Extra! Extra! Extra! Hitler crosses the Austrian border with a German army!" The newspapers said that he would arrive in Vienna at 10 o'clock the next morning (March 13) to give a speech in the Heldenplatz, the big central square downtown. And everybody said, "My God. What will happen?" All businesses were to be shut, no schools would be open, and the streetcars would not run. Nothing. Everybody should go to the Heldenplatz. Well, I went to the Heldenplatz. I was some distance from Hitler, but I could see him standing in the car and then on the balcony of the chancellery. When he arrived, the people were jubilant, absolutely jubilant. The Heldenplatz held about 300,000 people and it was packed. I was amazed that the people were so jubilant.

Wasn't there a strong movement already to affiliate with Germany?

AKELEY: I thought that the thinking in Vienna was separated completely from the thinking in the hinterland. In Vienna, the capitalists and the burghers agreed on one thing: they did not like the Germans. The Viennese thought that dinner consisted of five courses, while the Germans thought that a Bismarck herring and a potato was a good meal. There was a joke that illustrated their difference in thinking:

Something happens to the Viennese tramway tracks, so the tramway company sends out workers to repair it. They work and work and nothing happens. Finally a German comes by, and he comes over and takes a heavy crowbar and

with it he straightens out the tracks. And the Viennese look at the German and say, "Well, obviously you can do it if you use force."

German tourists came to Vienna for the *Sängerfest* (singing festival), crowding the Ring district stores and restaurants, and you had to translate the menus for them. Many Austrians refused to go downtown when the Germans had taken over.

Then how do you account for this enormous enthusiasm for Hitler at the Heldenplatz?

AKELEY: Hitler proved something when he took power in Germany by giving the people work. While the rate of unemployment dropped in Germany, it still stayed high in Austria, especially in Vienna, which had almost a third of the entire country's population. And therefore the workers were very excited about what Hitler had accomplished. I'm not sure they were for Hitler, but the promise of work was enormously attractive.

So the people were enthusiastic for Anschluss *because of the depression?*

AKELEY: They saw what Hitler had done in Germany.

And the great Viennese contempt for the Germans vanished?

AKELEY: Right. And when Hitler spoke of the Ostmark, they suddenly felt, "My golly! We will be somebody, not a nothing like Belgium, the Netherlands, or Liechtenstein."

Do you think that had anything to do with the fact that Hitler was an Austrian?

AKELEY: An Austrian in charge of Germany was the biggest thing that could happen to an Austrian, especially since he came from the lower classes; and when he promised something, he was seen to get it.

He also promised to get rid of Jewish influence. Wasn't part of the jubilation because the Austrians now believed that they could now go out and give it to the Jews?

AKELEY: Definitely. But this feeling was directed against the Polish Jews.

Well, maybe certain Austrians felt it was against the Polish Jews, but the Nazis themselves didn't make any such distinctions.

AKELEY: No. Because they didn't have the same experience.

This may be the perception of the social class from which you came—the older Austrian Jewish families may very well have felt that the Ostjuden *were an embarrassment—but I wonder whether antisemitism in Austria wasn't directed at all Austrian Jews.*

AKELEY: No, they didn't know enough about that. They had no experience.

Could this feeling have been prompted by a false belief on the part of the established Jewish community that the bulk of the Nazi antisemitic legislation would fall on the Ostjuden *rather than on them?*

AKELEY: I think so.

It seems that in your circles your Jewishness was defined more by others than by yourself.

AKELEY: That's right. When we were asked, we naturally said, "We are Jews," but we never talked about it.

After the demonstration for Hitler in the Heldenplatz, I walked back home, and when I got there, my sister and her husband, Otto Skall, were waiting. They had packed two suitcases and were leaving immediately for Prague. And my mother said, "But you need your jewelry." But my brother Kurt remarked, "The banks are closed. Besides, nobody should go to the safety deposit box and take things out, because people will get suspicious." They asked my mother how much money she had with her and how much my brother and I had. We gave it all to her—enough to live on for about two or three months. I was wearing a very beautiful ring, and I gave it to her. That was the only jewelry at home; the rest was at the bank. Then they said good-bye. There was no crying. My mother did not cry when any of us left. I remember my brother bit his lip; he was a crier even when he saw a sad movie. And so they left. They thought that they would be pretty safe in Czechoslovakia. Otto was from Prague. He was a first cousin of Stefan Zweig, the famous writer. And my sister didn't want to come to America. She said, "What immigrants do in America is become maids, and I'm not going to be a maid, not on my life." So they left, the two of them, and I never saw them again.

My brother left shortly after my sister. His wife had a first cousin living in Switzerland, and she was willing to guarantee them financially. At that time, I was engaged to a very nice man who was half-Jewish—his mother was a Gentile—and he called me the next day and said, "I have to talk to you." I said, "Naturally." So he came and said, "Look Anni, since I am a *Mischling* (half-breed),

I am not in direct danger. Whatever we had together will have to end. It doesn't help you, and it would only bring me into danger." I said, "Fine," and that was the end of that.

Did you still have your job?

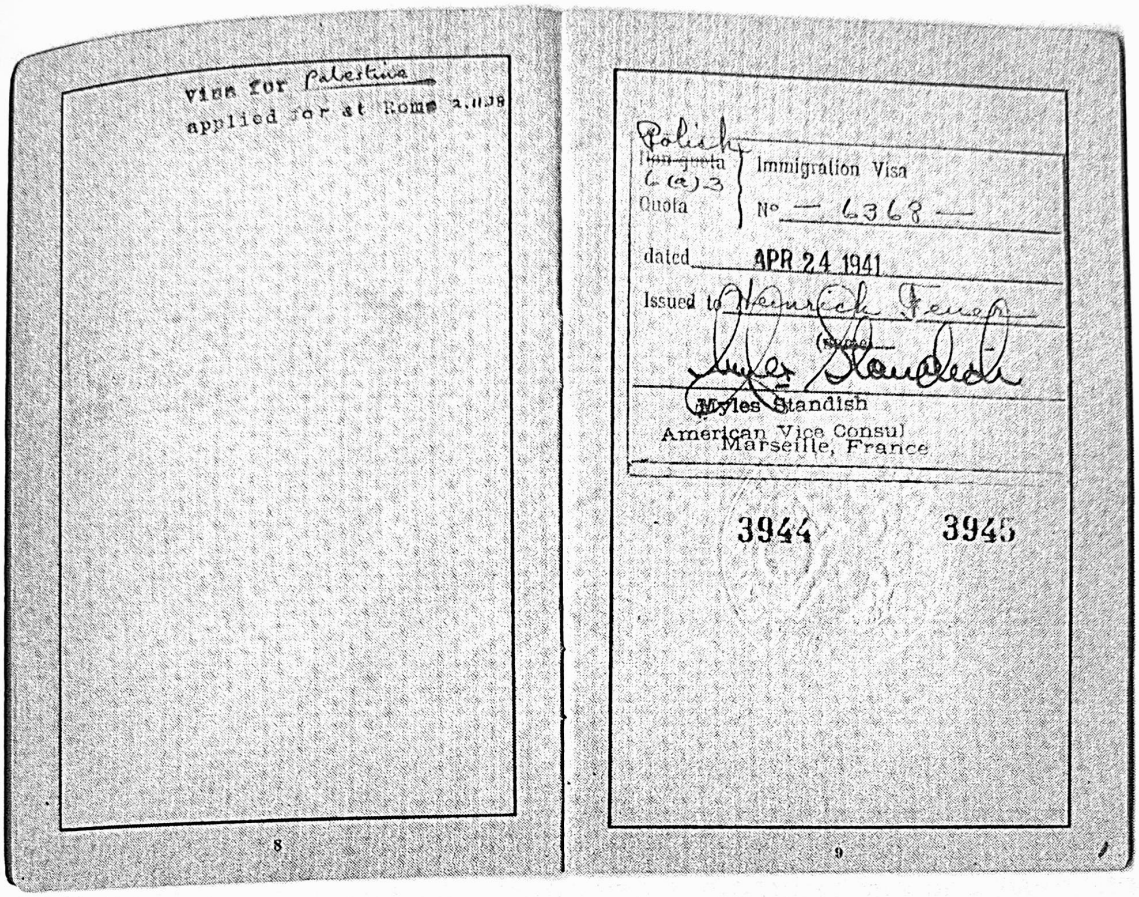
AKELEY: The business opened the day after Hitler spoke in the Heldenplatz. When I arrived, the owner told me he was leaving the country. The Nazis were closing his business, and since they wouldn't let Christians work for Jews any longer, it was up to me to help with the liquidation. He told me that when the checks came in I was to divide them up, sending the ones with the large amounts to him, giving the ones with the small amounts to the Nazis. "And," he said, "buy yourself some gloves, do not leave fingerprints on any envelopes or checks." He instructed me to send the checks to a certain address in New York, and then he said good-bye.

Within a week the Nazis came and asked, "Where is the owner?" And I told them that he had left the country. They warned me not to send him any money, but I managed to do so anyhow. The Nazis, by the way, were not disagreeable, they were very businesslike. But they treated me like an underling who had to obey their orders. They continued to pay me the same wages, but I only made half of what I got before because I only worked from nine to one o'clock. This job lasted about four months, until the liquidation process was complete.

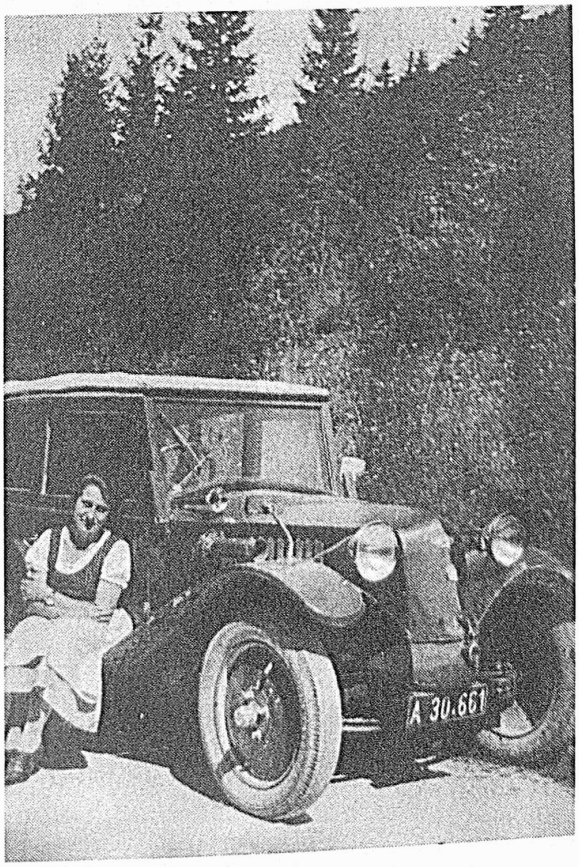
Shortly after, the new Nazi government told us that we could no longer live in our villa in the "Cottage" District. The Nineteenth District was to be "Jew-free." They gave us four months to find quarters in either the First or Second Districts, the only areas in Vienna where the Jews could live. That was not too bad for us, because my mother still had that house on the Salztorgasse. So she made arrangement to move back. Naturally we had to sell the furniture of the villa. We ended up giving most of it away. What we managed to sell brought less than one-tenth of what it was worth. The Nazis then confiscated that house and also our country residence at Altaussee.

The Nazi legislation gave your fellow Austrians an opportunity to take advantage of you?

AKELEY: Definitely. But none of our acquaintances. Mostly strangers. Our Christian friends, with one exception, behaved fabulously. And they ran a risk in helping us. And then came the law that Jews could buy in stores only after everybody else was served. Once when I went to the delicatessen, where we always shopped, there were about four people ahead of me, but while I was



More than two years after Henry Feuer escaped from Austria, he was able to obtain an immigration visa to the United States. Note that he is included in the Polish quota.



Anna Mandler Akeley in 1931, enjoying the beautiful Alpine scenery.

waiting about six more people came. The daughter of the owner waited on the first four and then said out loud, "Mrs. Frost, you were here before those others, what would you like?" The greengrocer and the butcher were also extremely nice, going out of their way to serve me.

That's interesting, because the picture that has come across is that on the whole the Austrians behaved very badly.

AKELEY: Well, of course, all that changed completely when we moved to the First District, where we were not known. Then things became rather disagreeable. But to the Polish Jews they behaved horribly. And I mean horribly. They refused to sell to them.

Are you saying that the humiliations against the Jews were primarily, if not exclusively, against the Ostjuden?

AKELEY: Yes.

How onerous was your move back to the First District?

AKELEY: My mother and I were told that we could have two and a half rooms, one toilet, and one bathroom. Every other space had to be rented out to Jews who were also expelled. Therefore we had two other families (four other grown persons) living in our apartment. We were not accustomed to that, but they all behaved very well. I mean it was not a real hardship.

Did you ever remember thinking that being Jewish was a real pain in the neck? Since you didn't identify very strongly with being Jewish, did you see all this Jewishness as a burden that you would rather live without?

AKELEY: A terrible burden, you know. I never would have admitted it, because it was not proper to do so.

But if somebody by a magic wand had said, "You are no longer a Jew, but just an Austrian"—this would have been perfectly fine with you?

AKELEY: Perfectly.

Despite the worsening conditions for the Jews, the Mandlers struggled to maintain as much of their former life as they could. Anna still went skiing, her mother still held her *jour,* her open house, once a month on Sunday afternoon. To avoid the embarrassment of shop-

ping in grocery stores, where they would be discriminated against, they relied on a family connection to obtain food. A sister of Anna's father had married a Gentile who owned a large grocery store, and he used to have food delivered to their apartment, including coffee and tea, which were otherwise virtually unobtainable. A family servant, who being Christian was no longer allowed to work for Jews, brought them weekly food parcels. Other friends provided similar assistance. When the Nazis decreed that the Jews should get no fuel, a friendly dealer loaded up 100 kilograms of coal in two suitcases for Anna to carry home. Anna refused to wear the yellow star, required of all Jews, though she would have been arrested had she been stopped and asked to show her identity card, which was stamped with a "J" for *Jude*. Walking around without the Star of David was especially risky during the time she had been engaged in the liquidation of the publishing business, since she had to report every day to police headquarters to deliver the incoming checks. The clerks, who were Austrians working for the Germans, knew she was Jewish but never reported her. Anna believed that this Viennese noblesse oblige came from the fact that she was from a prominent law-abiding family whose name had never been attached to scandal.

After the publishing business was liquidated, Anna was without work until the end of the year, when she was told to report to the Vienna General Hospital, where she was put to work shaving wounded soldiers. Since the Second World War had not yet started, the origin of these wounds remained a mystery, and Anna was instructed not to ask any questions. She was only on the shaving detail a short time before she was transferred to the X-ray unit and allowed to practice a skill in which she had earned a degree. In July 1939, she met Edward Stowe Akeley, an assistant professor at Purdue University, who would be her husband. How Edward happened to be in Vienna is characteristic of the way many American Jews sought to maintain contact with families and friends during the Nazi period:

> The wife of the head of the Purdue physics department had a sister who had lived in Vienna and had come to Lafayette shortly after the *Anschluss*. The sister was a friend of Anna's sister, Auguste, now living in Prague. When the Nazis invaded the

rest of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, creating the satellite state of Bohemia and Moravia under Reichsprotektor Konstantin von Neurath, contact to the outside world almost ceased. Knowing that Edward planned to go to Europe for the summer, the department head asked him to go to Prague to look up Auguste Skall, since his sister had not been heard from since the German takeover. Edward did so. Auguste then asked Edward if he could go to Vienna, since she could no longer communicate with her mother and her sister. Again Edward complied. His first meeting with Anna in her First District apartment was tense, because Anna thought he might be a Gestapo agent masquerading as an American. She avoided saying anything pejorative about the Nazis, and his admission that he considered Hitler the curse of the world only put her more on guard.

AKELEY: We found out that we rather liked each other. And he said, "Anni, you have to get out of the country. I have already given two affidavits to Berlin Jews. But since I am only an assistant professor with $1,800 a year, they won't let me give any more affidavits. I will try, however, to find somebody who will give you an affidavit. Get out, get out, it is crazy to stay. It will have a terrible ending." And when he left, I took him to the airport and I thought that I would never see him again. And I was very sad and said, "Now Edward, that's good-bye." He said, "I hope not, I will try everything I can. Anyhow, get out, wherever you can go, get out."

He went off to his plane, and I was standing to take the bus back to town when an open-top car with some SS officers stopped, and one of them asked me, "Fräulein, could we give you a ride?" I thought, what am I going to do? If I refuse I will offend them, so I accepted. On the way back, we talked small talk, the flooding of the Danube etc., nothing concerning Nazism and nothing concerning the Jews. They let me off near St. Stephen's Cathedral because I did not want to be let off at my home. I said, "Thank you very much for the ride." They said, "It was our pleasure, good-bye and *auf Wiedersehen*." I got off, thinking that was a close call, and when I got home I was determined to do something to get out of Austria.

Getting an affidavit to enter the United States could be a simple formality for some but an insurmountable obstacle for others.

Those with family members already in the United States had relatively little trouble, but those without such connections often had a desperate search ahead. Success often depended on sheer luck.

Shortly after the *Anschluss,* Anna had gone to the Jüdische Kultusgemeinde for assistance. The Nazis used the Jewish Religious Community to promote its policy of forced emigration. According to the project worked out by SS chief Reinhardt Heydrich, rich Jews would be forced to pay for the emigration of the "Jewish rabble." However, the officials at the Kultusgemeinde considered Anna Mandler Frost a Christian because of that "conversion" of her father, and they told her to "go somewhere else."

AKELEY: I had no resentment, because I understand that they could help only the people who were members of a congregation and who went to synagogue. People like that were not in our circle. Although I have no resentment, I didn't feel very happy about it. But I understood their way of acting.

A Thirty-Thousand-Dollar Passport

The incident with the SS officers underlined the extreme precariousness of her existence and prompted her to write to friends in New York City to ask if they could get her an affidavit. The friends succeeded in a roundabout, unexpected way.

Once as the friends were standing in a queue at the Metropolitan Opera to buy tickets for a performance, they happened to be discussing the problem of getting an affidavit for their friend with other people in the same line. An eavesdropper joined the conversation and asked them to give him the name of their friend. About a month later, Anna received a letter from Washington, D.C, written by a Jewish bureaucrat, who asked for the details of her situation. The man promised to see what he could do. About two months later, at the end of 1939, the affidavit arrived. The affidavit came with a note: "I wish you luck, but don't come to me expecting that I will help you further."[18] By then the Germans had already invaded Poland, touching off the European War.

Anna still needed two more important documents: a passport to leave Austria and a visa to enter the United States. To get the German passport she turned to the Quakers for help. The Quakers did

not have an office in Vienna, which was now a mere provincial capital, and Anna had to go to Berlin. It was the first time she had been in the German capital. She was impressed by its cleanliness, beauty, and power. She also noticed that fewer Nazi flags flew there than in Vienna, and nobody asked her if she was Jewish—the National Socialist regime was so well-established that no special point had to be made.

AKELEY: They didn't seem to even try to find out who I was. You know, they had that famous attitude that "business is business."

Didn't your papers state that you were a Jew?

AKELEY: I carried my Austrian birth certificate, which did not have the "J" stamped on it, so there was no way they could tell. When I originally went to the Society of Friends, they asked me how much money I had, and when they found out, they told me that a passport would cost me $30,000.

I was already aware of the amount, and my mother had agreed to sell some of her stock to cover it. I stayed in Berlin three days, because it took me two days to get the money transferred.

On January 24, 1939, the Germans established a central emigration office for Jews within the finance ministry. However, the SS was the agency really responsible for solving the Jewish question by emigration and evacuation in a way that was most favorable under present conditions. Since the Nazis always intended their anti-semitic policy to be a paying proposition, they issued passports strictly on the basis of what the market would bear. Anna would have been forced to pay a large sum for her exit visa, even if she had been able to use the offices of the Jewish Kultusgemeinde. All agencies that acted as go-betweens had to turn over most of the proceeds to the Reich treasury and were allowed to keep only a small amount for expenses.

How did you learn that the Quakers might help you?

AKELEY: The moment the Nazis came, the Jews who could get no help from the Jewish organizations discovered that the Quakers might be of assistance. It was understood that, unless you had a special prominence, you needed money to get out. But I had jobs and had not done anything special. The Quakers behaved very well.

After I got my passport, I had to go to the American consulate in Vienna. I thought that would be a very simple procedure, but at the consulate I was told I had to go to a doctor and prove that I did not have TB. So I got X rays and returned to the consulate. It was located in the former embassy building, a gorgeous old palace with furniture in real Maria Theresian style. The consul sat at a beautiful rococo desk inlaid with three different types of wood. When I came in, he had both his feet on that desk. I said, "Good afternoon," but he hardly said anything. He was not incorrect, but he made no attempt to be polite. He made me swear that I would not overthrow the government of the United States. I didn't know which hand I was supposed to use, but I saw that he had put up his left hand, and so I did the same. But he didn't even look up. He told me to come back in a month.

How long was it from when you first went to the consulate until the time they told you could go?

AKELEY: About six weeks. Then I booked a first-class train ticket to Trieste and bought a first-class boat ticket from Trieste to New York. It was the first time I would travel first class. The Jewish upper classes never went first class. They considered first class only fit for the employees of the railroad or steamship companies, for aristocrats—and for Americans.

Why didn't those people go first class?

AKELEY: It was not done. It was too ostentatious. But I wanted to go out in style. I was allowed to take out a steamer trunk with my possessions. I got a lot into that: most of my clothes, including three dirndls and three ski outfits, some porcelain, and a few Persian rugs, one a silk prayer rug. But no silver, nothing like that. I was supposed to leave Trieste on June 28, 1940. But by then Italy had entered the war, and the whole Adriatic was closed for passenger travel.

After the stunning German offensive in the west in the spring of 1940, topped off by the humiliating retreat of the French army, Mussolini feared that he had to get into the war before Hitler took all the glory. He said he needed several thousand dead to be able to take his place at the peace table. Therefore, on June 10, 1940, he declared war on France and launched a westward offensive into the lower Alps. The Italian army was ill-prepared for operations and made little headway against French resistance. But the Duce's move

did come in time for him to claim a share of the spoils after the armistice was signed at Compiègne on June 22, 1940.

AKELEY: I sent Edward a telegram: "Can't come, Adriatic is closed." And he sent me a telegram that said, "The earth is round." At first I thought the message was crazy, but finally I understood what it meant. Edward wanted me to go east. So I had to go to Berlin again to get a ticket and the necessary permissions to travel through the Soviet Union.

I came back to Vienna, and I left in July. But this time I was allowed to take with me only two little suitcases and money equal to three American dollars. I packed some clothes, some perfume, and other personal effects—things like that. I was, however, warned not to take any valuable collector stamps, because they would find them. Well, like many others, I did take some stamps, and they never found them. But one year after I came to America, I gave my old clothes to the Salvation Army, forgetting that I had sewn the stamps inside the linings.

When you left, you knew the situation was not going to get any better for your mother.

AKELEY: I cried terribly; my mother did not cry at all. She said, "I hope to hear from you, and take care." And that was it. I was in a complete sort of desperation. I feared leaving my mother alone, but I thought I would be able to get her out of Austria as soon as I arrived in the United States and found work.

Two army officers were in the same train compartment with me, and they asked me where I was going. "Well, I'm going to Berlin." "What for?" "Then I want to go to Moscow." "Oh, are you one of the people who leave Germany on their own free will?" I said, "It is not on my own free will. I have to leave." And they said, "Prove it." And I said, "I cannot prove that I'm in danger." And they started saying, "That's not true. You might not be in an agreeable position, but it's not true that you are in danger." And I got very upset, because they kept insisting that I was leaving on my own free will. So finally I said, "Yes, I'm leaving on my own free will." What else could I have said?

Akeley took the Moscow-Express from Berlin, changing at Minsk for a train with the wider, Russian gauge. The German-Soviet Treaty of Nonaggression of August 23, 1939, together with its secret protocols, had prepared for the partition of Poland, which, once accomplished, allowed Hitler to fight a one-front war against France. A further "friendly agreement" between the two countries provided

for mutual political and economic cooperation, including exchanges of raw materials. Therefore, until the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, civilian passage was allowed between the two countries. The journey through occupied Poland passed through the battlefields of the previous fall, with their burned-out villages and sites of violent death. Warsaw was a city in ruins, a foretaste of what Hitler had in mind for other enemy capitals. When the fighting had stopped, the conquerors had rapidly repaired the destroyed infrastructure, so rail traffic was back to normal.

From Moscow, Akeley took the Trans-Siberian Railroad east, a trip of nearly 6,250 miles, lasting seven days and seven nights, across the Urals, around the southern tip of Lake Baikal, through six time zones and fourteen major cities. She was confined to the train during the whole journey, forbidden to get off even when it stopped briefly at a station. In that closed atmosphere, she had little rapport with fellow passengers, some of whom she suspected might be informants. From Chita a branchline headed southeast to Harbin and from there to Pusan in Korea, where she boarded a ship for Kobe, Japan.

When she arrived in Kobe, the local office of the Quakers told her that the ship on which she was booked for passage to the United States had been held up in the Philippines because of a typhoon. They could give her no idea of when her trip might be resumed, but in the meantime they arranged for her to be lodged in a room with three Japanese working girls, all sleeping on bedrolls. The Quakers also gave her a daily allowance in order to buy a bowl of curried rice twice a day.

With her visa permitting entry into the United States running out, Akeley booked passage on the *Hikawa Maru,* which sailed from Yokohama on September 3, 1940.[19]

AKELEY: I had accommodations in the hold of the ship. There were thirty people, men and women, in this one room with rows of bunks stacked in threes. I had the lowest one, which had advantages and disadvantages: the advantage was that one could get up right away, the disadvantage was that people woke you up when they climbed up and down the ladders for the upper bunks.

Leaving Yokohama was very touching. The people on land and the passengers held on to either end of paper streamers until they broke. The people were all Asiatic—I was one of the few Caucasians. And I was seasick for the entire seventeen-day trip.

Notes

1. *Documents of British Foreign Policy,* series 2, 6:751.
2. *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 655.
3. Ibid., 3.
4. Friedelind Wagner, *Heritage of Fire* (New York: Harper), 109.
5. Ibid., 124. The dumplings perhaps, but the liver, no. Hitler was a vegetarian.
6. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 131.
7. Ibid., 105–6.
8. Ibid., 857.
9. Ibid., 101.
10. *Documents of German Foreign Policy,* series D, 1:43–45.
11. The letter, dated June 8, 1938, was addressed to "Dr. Heinrich Feuer, in Schutzhaft, Landesgericht für Strafsachen, Wien I." It generously made Feuer's discharge effective three and half months hence, on 30 September. Ironically, the announcement was written on the official business stationary of the Firma Jacob Feuer.
12. Trieste had one of the highest ratios of intermarriage between Jews and Christians. In 1927, out of 355 marriages involving Jews, in only 100 were both partners Jewish.
13. The social legislation was, for example, quite detailed. Forbidden were marriages between Jews and non-Jews (this included converted Jews but excluded marriages for the purpose of legitimizing offspring); employment of Jews in Gentile households; and Jewish adoption of non-Jewish children. An additional decree provided for the expulsion of Jewish children from the state schools.
14. John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking, 1999).
15. This proved to be an extremely wise decision, as much of the popular resentment against the flood of refugees that inundated France from 1938 to 1940 was directed against those people who spoke French unintelligibly or not at all.
16. Had Feuer stuck around Nantes a few more days, the German military advance might have cut off his avenue of escape. When the armistice was signed on June 22, the German advance had reached the confluence of the Garonne and Dordogne Rivers, where they pour into the Gironde estuary, just north of Bordeaux.
17. In service since 1918, the one-funnel *Winnipeg* of the French Line was 9,802 tons and measured 473 by 59 feet. It was sunk by a submarine on October 22, 1942.
18. She would meet the man who had given her the affidavit briefly in San Francisco and did not hear from him again until after the war, when he was working for the American government in Germany. He wrote a letter to her in West Lafayette, asking her to supply an affidavit for someone he had met in Germany and enclosed a

photograph of a young, very pretty woman—obviously his girlfriend. Since the man was already married with a family in Washington, Anna was reluctant to comply. Yet her sense of obligation to the one who had helped save her life compelled her to honor his request and she furnished the affidavit.

19. This 11, 622 ton (511′ × 66′) one-stacker of the Nippon Ysen Kaisha Line was the only Japanese passenger ship to survive the Second World War. Commissioned in 1930, it was withdrawn from service three decades later.

Also the pain of betrayal?

FEUER: That has happened too, yes.

Are you, in essence, optimistic or pessimistic?

FEUER: At my age I don't know quite what you mean by optimism or pessimism. But I must be some sort of an optimist. I wouldn't be here if I hadn't been.

Survivorship Makes No Sense: Anna Mandler Akeley

"It was terrible to know that my mother had all the necessary papers but couldn't leave. It was too late, and that was that."

Short-Term Employment

Anna Akeley landed in Seattle, Washington, on September 20, 1940. During the crossing she had lost so much weight from not eating that she was down to eighty-three pounds. The immigration officer suspected that she might have tuberculosis and might have refused her entry had the Quakers, who had been expecting her arrival, not again taken her in charge and agreed to look after her room and board until she recuperated.

Apparently the Quakers had a tremendous organization.

ANNA AKELEY: Unbelievable, fantastic. And they didn't ask me to join the Quakers, nothing like that. I had to sign that I owed them $242, the money they had advanced to me during my trip.

Akeley didn't want to get married with debts. She therefore postponed moving to West Lafayette to be with Edward and went instead to San Francisco to find work. She held a variety of service jobs: bus girl in a restaurant at the Top of the Mark, a general maid and cook for a private family, a dental assistant, and a secretary for a mentally incapacitated Dutch meat importer with whom she spoke German. Having escaped the dangerous world of reality, she now entered one of make-believe.

AKELEY: The man's wife was a doctor, and they had two boys, one eight, the other one ten. The job paid eighty dollars a month plus room and board. So I went there, and his wife said, "I don't know what's wrong with my husband, but he doesn't function anymore. Although he is retired, he still thinks that he is a meat importer and tries to make phone calls, and he wants a secretary. So you make the phone calls, but don't worry, because the phone is disconnected. Don't be afraid of him. He is not dangerous at all." He was a small man, fifty-two years old, and rather weak. So I took the job.

When he met me, he shook my hand and said in good German, "I'm so glad, you know. I have trouble with another language." I said, "But you know Dutch." "Oh," he said, "Dutch is my mother language, but I cannot use it in business." So I arrived the next morning, and he said, "Please make a phone call to this firm and tell them that I want two and a half tons of their product." So I made the call. And then he said to me, "And now write a letter to that company, demanding that they send me the money they owe." So I typed the letter, and then he said to me, "It's bad with the situation as it is." And I asked him, "Sir, what situation?" And he said, "Oh, you know. The situation." He never knew what was going on.

And then he asked me, "Can you take shorthand?" I had learned very little German shorthand, and I couldn't do English shorthand at all. So he complained to his wife that I was not a good secretary. I should at least know English shorthand. But she said, "Look. She's a refugee. We cannot dismiss her."

But the day came when I couldn't stand this pretend world any longer. I wanted to scream at him and tell him what nonsense it was. Also, I was unhappy speaking German all day, because I wanted to speak English. However, I took it for about six weeks, and then I told his wife that I wanted to quit. She started to cry and said, "That's the trouble. I have had other people, and nobody can stand it. I understand. This is an impossible situation for me. He is demented. I will have to put him in an institution." And I said, "Because of me?" And she said, "Yes. Because I can't find anybody better than you." I told her I would stay on for another two weeks. And the last day I was there, I told him, "I have to go away because of family affairs." And he said, "It's better this way, you don't know shorthand, anyhow."

Akeley was still in San Francisco at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1940), and within days the United States was officially at war with Japan, Germany, and Italy.

While Henry Feuer was living in Luchon, he had to have his passport renewed every six months. Note that the renewals are issued by the Swedish consulate, which acted for Germany in France since the declaration of war.

One of a number of transit visas required for Anna Akeley's eastward voyage from Austria to the United States.

AKELEY: There was an international center that I used to go to on weekends where I made friends. The first time I went there after the Pearl Harbor attack, some agents of the FBI were sorting out the people into groups. They put Germans in one group and "neutrals" into another group. The Japanese did not go to that international center; I don't know where they went. I was put with the Poles and the Belgians, because the Austrians were also considered conquered people. They said, "All you who were overrun by Hitler are freed. But if you leave San Francisco, you have to let us know where you are going." I was extremely shaken.

Were you still in contact with your mother?

AKELEY: There were no longer any direct communications with Vienna. Even before, it was not as easy to telephone, and it was very expensive, but until the war we could correspond. She would write about the crowded conditions in which she lived, and how the people she was living with would get along. She was a great reader, and she told me I should read this or that book.

Did she convey any sense that she was in danger?

AKELEY: The only thing she would say was that things were complicated. She didn't dare go into details. She didn't know if her letters would be opened or not. It was very difficult for her, with all her children gone.

After my brother and I got to the United States, we hocked all the jewelry we had managed to get out and used it to get an affidavit for our mother. She already had a passport, and in November 1941 she received the affidavit. But because of her "agitated depression" she could not leave immediately, and by the time she was ready to travel, the Germans and the Americans were at war, and she couldn't go. It was terrible to know that my mother had all the necessary papers but couldn't leave. It was too late, and that was that.

When her debt to the Society of Friends was reduced to a mere three dollars, Akeley wrote to Edward and told him she would come in two weeks. He had been visiting her in San Francisco during his vacation periods.

AKELEY: I asked, "Well, Edward. How is Lafayette?" And he replied, "It's flat and the corn grows there." Still, I outfitted myself completely, even buying a silver fox stole. And I bought a typewriter. Edward said he would pick me up in Chicago. As I rode the train east, I looked out the window at America. We went

through Nebraska and Iowa, and there was nothing to see, just like going through Siberia. But on the Trans-Siberian the towns were one day apart, while here they were just a few miles. I thought the big silos were enormous bird feeders. When Edward picked me up in Chicago, he shook my hand. "Hello, how are you?" he said. He wasn't very demonstrative. And then he looked at me and said, "Why do you have dead animals around your neck?" It was those silver foxes. He never told me that the temperature could be ninety degrees. We were married on May 28, 1942.

The Introductory Courses

Did you feel completely secure in this country?

AKELEY: I didn't know then that deep down Franklin D. Roosevelt did not want so many Jews coming in. We thought he was a great rescuer.

On the whole, you felt very positive about living here?

AKELEY: I felt that here I can make a living.

How did you make that living?

AKELEY: The second day I was in West Lafayette, Edward introduced me to Karl Lark-Horowitz, the head of the physics department. I had known his sister in Vienna. When Horowitz had come to Purdue in 1928, the physics department was only a service department, so he went to President Edward Elliot to get it turned into a graduate department. Elliot, despite his antisemitism, recognized Horowitz's genius and gave him the money.[3]

What did you and Lark-Horowitz talk about when you met? Your Austrian background?

AKELEY: He asked me about my education. And that evening he called and asked me to send my credentials to him the next day. Edward took them over, and four hours later he called again and offered me a visiting instructorship teaching the introductory laboratory course in physics during the fall semester.

The scarcity of qualified teachers during the war prompted the offer, and also considerable anxiety in the one to whom it was made. Akeley had not studied physics since her days at the Roentgen Institute, sixteen years before. But her husband agreed to help refresh her knowledge by tutoring her every night after he had

finished his own teaching. Still, such help did not prepare her for the rigors of appearing before a class.

AKELEY: In my class, the shortest student was six feet tall, and when all five feet of me came in, they got up. They addressed me as "Madam," and I said, "Thank you, gentlemen. Please sit down." So far so good. But then on the first experiment I referred to "induced electrical current" as "seduced current." And they started to howl. Now, shy I was not, and I asked, "What's wrong?" And a 6'7" guy by the name of Bell, who was in the first row, stood up and looked down at me and asked, "Does Madam want a theoretical or experimental explanation?" Then somebody else corrected me, and I started to explain the principles of "induced" current. I taught five sections of that same course for two semesters, twenty-four hours a week, a full wartime load.

And I stood there and I had the feeling, "My God. I teach here some kids who really want to learn this. And some of them will not come back from the war." And I felt horrible about that.

Later Akeley was asked to develop a special physics course for physical education majors and one for home economics majors. Her husband was working on a secret army project to develop a system to trick the Germans into believing that they had been able to ascertain the wavelengths of the American radar system. When the war ended in 1945, the scarcity of professors, upon which circumstance Akeley's teaching position depended, also ended. Horowitz told her he could not ensure her tenure unless she got a Ph.D. He proposed arranging a special course of study, with himself and her husband as mentors. But this proved impractical, to say nothing of unethical, and she continued on a year-to-year contract. She continued working under this "temporary" arrangement until 1959, when finally at the age of fifty-five, she was rewarded with tenure, one of the few people in the science department to receive it without having a doctor's degree.[4] She continued in the rank of instructor until she retired twelve years later, in 1971. She had taught for twenty-nine years, winning a teaching award in the School of Science and special recognition by the university in the form of an official medal. These achievements she recalls with particular pride and satisfaction.

A Fantastic Opportunity

You have gone through many changes in your life. Did you ever have much opportunity to talk to people about your experiences?

AKELEY: I did not like to speak about the tragedy of my mother or the fate of my sister and my cousins. Once Rabbi Gedalyah Engel, who organizes the Holocaust Conference here, wanted me to come to the remembrance service, but I refused. I said, "I cannot. I do not want to. I don't need any remembrance day."

Did you also sense any reluctance in other people to hear accounts of survivors?

AKELEY: Yes, definitely.

What did you find out about your mother's and sister's disappearance?

AKELEY: After the war we hired a private investigator and found out that my mother had been deported to Theresienstadt in June 1942, and there she disappeared. We don't know what happened to her. She was probably sent from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, where she perished. My only hope was that she managed to kill herself rather than being led to her death, and that she was glad that it was going to be over.

What did you find out about your sister?

AKELEY: We got a letter telling us that on the day she and her husband were going to be deported, they turned on their gas stove. It's a terrible burden, and I try not to think about it, because if I do, I have to take antidepressants.

Do you ever dream about it?

AKELEY: Not at all. I dream more about Edward and sometimes my brother, but never about my mother or my sister and my cousins.

Never.

Aside from you and your brother, none of your family survived?

AKELEY: I, for some unknown reason, am the last one alive. That is very disagreeable, I assure you.

Why is that?

AKELEY: When I was younger, I thought death was bad, but I pushed the thought of it away. But somebody calls me from Vienna and says, "By the way, I'm coming to visit you. I would like to see you a last time." And then my lawyer

tells me, "You have to make arrangements in case you are totally incapacitated." And I have those memories of my father, who was so sick and in such pain that I couldn't stand it. That follows me now. If I get a pain, I go to three different emergency rooms. I am scared of pain because of my father.

Now I'm not much good for anything. When I taught, I got a "best teacher" award, that's true, but I really didn't do much for the students. I only understood that they didn't understand. However, coming to the United States gave me a fantastic opportunity to become a teacher, something that would never have happened had I stayed in Vienna.

Did you ever feel that you would like to go back to Vienna?

AKELEY: I never wanted to go back. Outside of my mother, I had nothing there. I was so sure when I arrived in this country that my brother and I would be able to get her out. I am offended by Vienna. I sure was kicked out. And when I'm thrown out, I stay out. I was never thrown out anywhere. I was always accepted. They rejected me, and, if I'm rejected, I go. I was shocked that the Viennese people would have gone for a thing like National Socialism, that it would become so fashionable to be antisemitic.

But it became fashionable all over Europe.

AKELEY: Naturally, it was catastrophic to be a Jew.

We're talking about more than just a fashion. Isn't this so-called "change" merely a revelation of what had been there all along?

AKELEY: Yes. But I prefer to think of those many who helped us.

But you still harbor tremendous resentment over how the society as a whole turned on you.

AKELEY: I was terribly bitter and I have never forgiven them.

Despite your feelings, did you ever go back?

AKELEY: Yes, with Edward. The houses we owned in Vienna were taken away, but I wanted to see if that villa we had in the country was still recorded in the name of Paul Mandler. I remember going to Altaussee and asking the mayor if I could see the books of ownership prior to 1938. And he said, "All those have disappeared." Naturally he was lying. But I asked a lawyer in the next-larger town, and he said, "Do not waste your money with me. I cannot do a thing about it." He was not unfriendly, but brusque.

Did Austria pay restitution?

AKELEY: The Germans gave money to both my brother and me. The Austrians had little money to give, but they put us on social security, paying us as if we had continued to work from 1938 to 1958. I now get eight hundred dollars a month. And my brother, who was higher-paid than I, got twelve hundred a month.

Did you get restitution for the property you lost?

AKELEY: We got only $60,000 for the villa in the Nineteenth District, a ridiculous price, because it eventually sold for $700,000. But the house was in bad shape. During the occupation, the property was in the American sector, and the officers quartered there tore the wooden wainscoting off the walls to use in those big ceramic stoves that were in every room. They offered to pay for that damage, but Kurt and I wrote back that we were taken in by America, and we were very happy that they were there, and that we didn't want to be paid. They replied, insisting that we please accept payment. They found it very difficult to understand how we could refuse payment. But Kurt and I persisted; and that idiotic thing went on until they gave up.[5] Our house in the First District was bombed very badly. It wasn't clear who hit it, but we never asked the Americans for restitution. We got very little for what was left—I think ten thousand dollars each.

The nice thing about my trip there was that it gave me the opportunity to thank some of the people who had been so nice to us and to give them presents for their kindness. For example, we had given our silver candelabra to the tailor, and now he wanted to give them back. But I told him that I no longer had any use for such things and that he should keep them or sell them. Also, I had brought with me some jewelry, which I distributed to those people who were nice. I was glad to see them. But I did not enjoy one moment in Vienna.

Didn't you miss the luxurious lifestyle you once had? In West Lafayette you live rather modestly by comparison.

AKELEY: I was dumb to think once that everybody needed at least five servants.

Weren't you angry about the style of life that was taken away?

AKELEY: Not as much angry as deeply offended. I was fourth-generation Viennese.

Your family was destroyed because you were Jewish. How do you see yourself now in terms of any Jewish persona?

AKELEY: I was punished for something when I had nothing done wrong. My family was treated unfairly, although I do not remember that we were ourselves unfair. My father and mother always had an open pocketbook for charitable causes. They contributed, for example, to the repair of the Mariakirche-am-Gestade.

Your father also helped the Jewish community.

AKELEY: And how!

There must have been in him a certain identity with the Jewish community.

AKELEY: Definitely. Only he did not go to synagogue or anything. I mentioned that the only thing he did was to insist that my brother became bar mitzvahed.

Do you have any regrets about your Jewish identity?

AKELEY: No. No regrets. But in Vienna I never belonged to the Jews, nor did I belong to the Gentiles, most of whom were to a certain point antisemitic, saying such things as, "What do you expect? He's a Jew."

Did you ever regret not having children?

AKELEY: I never wanted children. That is very strange, because I'm not an ogre. I find children very nice. But Sigmund Freud said that people want to have children so they can avoid a concrete ending to their life, and I have to reply that I never had the feeling that one has to conquer death.

You think of yourself as Jewish one way or the other?

AKELEY: I was born a Jew, and therefore I am a Jew. Period. But I always objected to that Judeo-Christian combination when their concepts of God are so different. The Christian God is an all-forgiving God, an all-loving God.

Except he is also the God who eternally damns anybody who doesn't believe in Him.

AKELEY: On the other hand, the Jewish God punishes people unto the seventh generation. That is not a very friendly God.

Did you ever think about why you escaped extermination and others didn't?

AKELEY: Survivorship doesn't make sense. To say that somehow I was protected by God doesn't make any sense.

It's not uncommon for people consciously or subconsciously to feel a certain sense of guilt because just by chance they made it. You feel the same way?

AKELEY: Absolutely.

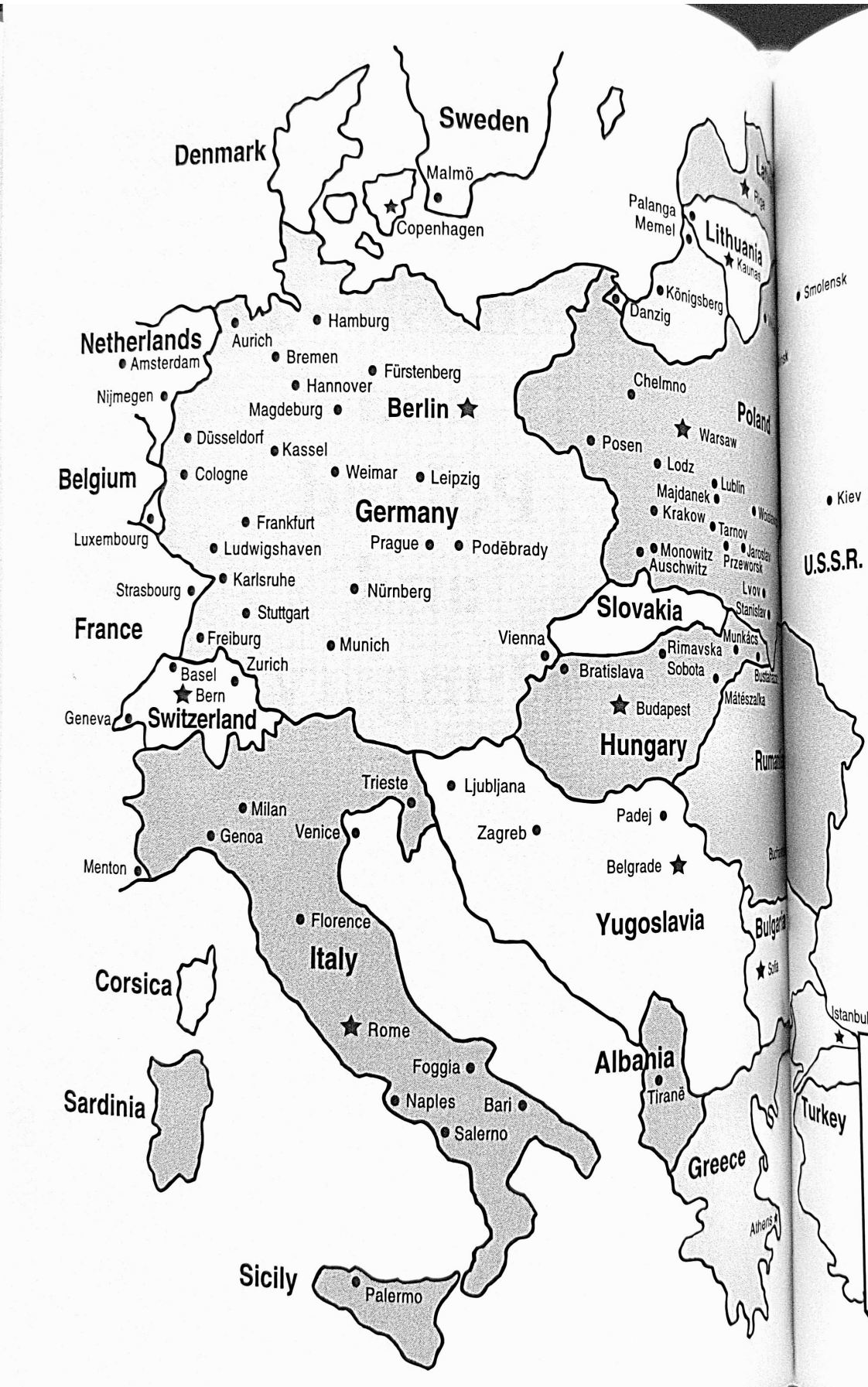
What do you feel gave you the ability to survive?

AKELEY: Luck. I was lucky. There is no other explanation.

Notes

1. Paula Feuer was born in Manhattan (New York City). She got her master's degree and Ph.D. at Purdue, where Henry met her. She was in the engineering science department, from which she retired as a full professor.
2. This interview was conducted before the success of the far right Freedom Party of Austria in the October 1999 national elections. The FPO won 27 percent of the votes, which, in the Austrian government formed on February 4, 2000, earned it half of the cabinet posts, including the deputy chancellorship. Party leader Jörg Haider, the head of the state government of Carinthia, had pandered to the Austrian electorate with a clearly xenophobic and volkish campaign. Although Haider had once called Hitler's government a heinous criminal regime, he came from a Nazi family and was proud of it, and he was constantly willing to play on Nazi and racist themes if it served his purpose. In 1995, he praised a group of Wehrmacht and Waffen SS veterans for having "risked their lives so that the younger generation should have a future in which order, justice, and decency are still principles." On another occasion, he said that "Vienna must not become Chicago," meaning a city of mixed-race gangsterism. Some doubt whether Haider believed his own rhetoric—he would readily pull in his horns when pinned down—but there was no question that his disturbing message fell on fertile ground. Many Austrians, like people in other countries, were alarmed at the increased immigration from eastern, mostly Moslem countries, and they were disturbed that European multiculturalism would destroy their national integrity.

   The Austrians have also had difficulty reconciling themselves with their Nazi past. On the one hand, they could look upon themselves as victims of the *Anschluss;* on the other, they could view the Nazi period without shame and even with a certain amount of admiration. *Wir brauchen einen kleinen Hilter* (we need a little Hilter) goes a popular slogan.
3. Once at a faculty reception Elliot said to Edward Akeley, "I heard that you married a Jewish refugee. She didn't seem to me to be either Jewish or a refugee when you



CENTRAL EUROPE

On the eve of the
German attack on Poland
September 1939

Songs of Derogation: Anna Whitehouse Berkovitz

"I always felt, especially after the war, a terrific pressure to make up for everything that [my mother] had lost."

A Ruthenian Community

Anna Weiszhausz was born in Munkács in Ruthenia (now Mukachevo, Ukraine), which before the creation of Czechoslovakia had been in the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy. The city had been one of the most thoroughly Jewish cities of the empire, a formidable center of Hasidim. After the First World War, its Jewish population continued to grow, although many families were in the process of abandoning or had already abandoned traditional Orthodox beliefs and ways of life. Many were sympathetic to Zionism. By 1930, the year Anna Berkovitz was born (as Anikó Weiszhausz), Jews comprised over 40 percent of the Munkács population. The city had five yeshivas, a Hebrew press, and thirty synagogues, most of which were Orthodox.

Anna's parents, Eugene and Elizabeth,[4] did not keep kosher, observe Jewish holidays, or go to the synagogue. They had been part of a Magyarized middle class and no longer spoke Yiddish at home or associated only with Jews. Anna's father was the son of a wine merchant who had sent all of his six sons to the university. Eugene graduated from the University of Vienna with a degree in engineering and spoke Hungarian, German, and Czech fluently.

His wife, Elizabeth Friedman, was the daughter of a lumber merchant and the granddaughter of an officer in the Hungarian army. The family "owned" the local salt concession, a monopoly that made the local population refer to them as the "Salty Friedmans."

Anna's grandparents were not as secularized as her parents. They kept the Sabbath and a kosher household. But, in a nod to progress, Anna's maternal grandmother permitted her children to eat ham and kielbasa, as long as they did so outside the house.

ANNA BERKOVITZ: My mother's parents, with whom I lived for several years, probably had as much effect on the formation of my own values and character as did my parents. They were "progressive" in the sense that they were tolerant

of other religions; they believed in secular education, they had liberal social attitudes, and they dressed fashionably. But they defiantly adhered to and kept up Jewish traditions, although not within the narrow tenets of Orthodoxy. In the United States they might be termed "liberal Orthodox" or "Conservative." My grandfather attended synagogue every week as well as on all the Jewish holidays, when my grandmother also went. They were realists to the extent that they knew that if they didn't allow their children to eat nonkosher food on the terrace at home, the children would probably go to the local tavern and eat it nonetheless.

A great deal of what I know about Jewishness I ascribe to these grandparents. My fondest and most happy childhood memories are of the traditional Sabbath dinners, the holiday festivities, and the interminable seders at their house. The warmth of these celebrations has remained with me throughout my life.

Anna attended a Zionist school, one with no special religious classes. Hebrew, though, was the main language of instruction, established in order to prepare the younger generation for settlement in Palestine.

BERKOVITZ: Education meant an awful lot to my parents. From the time I was born, I knew that I had to excel in school. I just knew that getting a B was not acceptable. Everybody told me that my mother was the best in school and that my father was the best in school and that I had to follow their footsteps. The question of my not going to university was never brought up, because it was always assumed that I would go either to the University of Prague or to Budapest or Vienna, and I would become a professional. There was absolutely no other possibility.

How did you react to that pressure?

BERKOVITZ: I was bothered that I might not be able to live up to those expectations. But there was no alternative. My mother never taught me any of the household arts, like how to cook and how to sew. She prepared me to be a professional.

Was your mother a graduate from a university?

BERKOVITZ: She went to a *Bürgerschule,* sort of a middle school, and she was very proud that she had been a good student, but when she was sixteen her parents didn't allow her to go on to the Gymnasium because they needed her to super-

vise their household and servants. My mother passed away five years ago, when she was eighty-two years old, and when she was dying she told me that although she admired her parents, she always resented the fact that they had taken her out of school.

Your mother was, then, the driving force for going to the university?

BERKOVITZ: My mother was a very strong person. In fact, I put that on her gravestone: "Elizabeth Whitehouse, a woman of character and principle." When she died, I was close to sixty, but until her end I still was her little girl, and I always felt, especially after the war, a terrific pressure to make up for everything that she had lost.

On October 8, 1938, following the Munich Agreement, which had cleared the way for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, Ruthenia became part of the Autonomous Republic of the Carpatho-Ukraine, a satellite of Germany. This arrangement lasted until March 15, 1939, when the region became a province of Hungary. All these political changes affected Anna's education. While still in primary school, she would change schools and languages of instruction four times: from Hebrew to Czech to Russian to Hungarian and finally back to Hebrew.

BERKOVITZ: I wasn't through yet, because then after all that, I came to the United States and learned another language. That was probably as traumatic as any, because at that time I was a teenager.

Such rapid changes were very traumatic and even years later affected me, when I had children of my own. When the question of a sabbatical came up and my husband wanted to go to France or to Israel, I wouldn't go. I did not want to subject my children to what I went through, having to go to different schools, where you felt a complete outsider, a stranger, and you didn't understand the language.

When Ruthenia became part of Hungary, the position of the Jews became more precarious. Antisemitic legislation, inspired by the Nürnberg Laws of National Socialism, limited Jewish participation in the liberal professions to 20 percent and in the administration to 5 percent. Jewish economic activity was also restricted, resulting in a loss of livelihood for a quarter of a million people. New racial

laws defined a Jew as a person whose two parents were considered Jewish when the new state of Hungary had been created in 1919, whether or not they actually practiced the Jewish religion. This qualifier added 100,000 Christians to the category of Jew.

Anna's father had been a reserve officer in the Czechoslovakian army, and when Ruthenia became part of Hungary, he received a commission in the Hungarian army. But no sooner given than taken away: he was demoted to the ranks and assigned to a special Jewish labor battalion. Two younger brothers of Anna's mother were also in the labor battalions. When Hungary joined the war against the Soviet Union on June 27, 1941, five days after the German invasion, Eugene's detachment was sent to Russia. These army auxiliaries were divided into ten to twelve units of about 14,000 men each. The men wore uniforms but had no rank and were expected to do all the dirty and dangerous work: dig trenches, handle the dead, and march in front of the regular troops across mine fields. Most of the Jews who thus served on the eastern front never returned.

No Place to Go

From 1940 to 1944, Anna lived in Munkács with her grandparents while her mother remained in Bustahaza (now Bustino, Ukraine), a small village in the Carpathian Mountains, where her husband had worked as a supervisor for a Swiss lumber company. He had become a victim of the Jewish quotas and was out of work when the war began, but the company he had worked for still allowed him and his wife to stay in the house it owned.

BERKOVITZ: I would wake up in the morning, hearing the Hungarian soldiers sing derogatory songs about Jews. In one of them, the words went something like this:

Kis kertemben zsidó magot ültettem
Minden reggel puska bottal ütöttem
Mégis ki nöt keze, lába, szakálla
Kötelet a büdös zsidó nyakára![5]

Were these soldiers from the Munkács community?

BERKOVITZ: Probably not. There was a military post there, and the soldiers would sing as they marched through town. Then because of the quotas, my

grandfather lost his wholesale coal license, and he had to go into the retail business. Where once he sold carloads of coal, he now had to measure it out in bundles or individual charcoal briquettes. Hardly the type of business that he was used to. In my grandfather's house also lived two of his daughters and two of his sons, my younger aunts and uncles, and some Hungarian soldiers.

My grandfather's income was diminished, but we were home and we were getting along. We thought we were relatively safe. The Hungarians were rounding up German, Czech, and Polish Jewish refugees, but we thought the same thing couldn't happen to us because the Hungarians would not let it happen. After all, we were integrated into the professional, political, and mercantile life of Hungarian society.

What did you hear about the progress of the war?

BERKOVITZ: We knew a lot of what was going on. We listened to the radio. My grandfather's office had big maps on the walls, and every day he followed the military campaigns with pins. We were politically very aware and were hoping that eventually this monster [Hitler] would be stopped. But we did not know about the extermination of the Jews. We knew about concentration camps, we knew about ghettos, but we really did not know about the Final Solution.

What broadcasts were you listening to?

BERKOVITZ: Before our radios were confiscated around 1943, we were getting it from the BBC. We were aware of the Blitz, the course of the struggle in North Africa, the battles in the Soviet Union. But there was also a grapevine: so-and-so talking to so-and-so, and someone who talked to a guy who was there, and this and that. There were also the Polish, German, and Czech refugees who had a sort of information underground. People would come and go. They would come to our house collecting money for this or that, dropping bits of news.

Just after the war with Russia began, the police started rounding up people who did not have legitimate Hungarian citizenship or people whose parents were foreign-born. They didn't touch us, but my grandfather had a cousin who was a chemical engineer and had been born in Poland, as was his wife. The couple had an eighteen-year-old son who had been born in Munkács, but that didn't save him. One day the police picked him up and put him across the border into Poland. He was eventually shot, but we didn't know that at the time.

The deportations of foreign Jews began in July 1941, when the Hungarian Office for Alien Control expelled about 20,000 Jews to German-conquered Galicia. These people had, for the most part,

come from areas that had once been part of Czechoslovakia. They were sent to the Kamenets-Podolski area of the General Government,[6] where German and Hungarian army units massacred them.

BERKOVITZ: People came and promised to get these deportees back for a certain amount of pengös [the basic Hungarian currency unit]. The grandparents of that boy I told you about went through the horrible, terrible agony of spending all their money to get him back. "Yes," they were told, "we know where the guy is; we know where he's being kept; yes, he's there; well, he wasn't there, but he'll be there tomorrow. Next week we will bring him home." But he never returned.

After our radio was confiscated, we no longer knew what was happening. We lived only with rumors, hopes, and fears. But compared with what happened later, when the Nazis came, we seemed to lead a rather normal life. We had enough food, we had enough clothing, and I still went to school.

Was there antisemitism in that school?

BERKOVITZ: Up until the time the Nazis came, there was no overt antisemitism. We still had religious instruction. The Catholics would stay in the homeroom, the Protestants would go down the hall, and the Jews would go down to the basement.

Other than the fact than you got the basement, were there any stumbling blocks put in the way of this religious instruction?

BERKOVITZ: No, and I continued to have girlfriends who were non-Jewish as well as Jewish. The only overt harassment I ever experienced was when I would go to school on Saturday, and the religious kids, the Jewish kids, would stone me.

It seems kind of remarkable that there was no "official" prejudice, considering that Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany.

BERKOVITZ: In fact, there was. My father lost his job. My grandfather lost his wholesale business. I was not allowed to attend the Hungarian Gymnasium because of quota restrictions. I was made to feel that I was different, that I was part of an unacceptable minority. Consequently, I never felt completely secure.

But most of the people that we dealt with in Munkács were Jewish: the doctor, the dentist, schoolteachers, and merchants. I wasn't the one who came in contact with the officials, who were non-Jewish, so I don't know how unpleasant things were for my grandfather, for example. What he had to go through to get his licenses renewed, or if he was hassled when our radios were taken away.

Hungarian army officers took over two of the five bedrooms in my grandparents' house. I had to sleep in my grandfather's room because my old room

was now occupied by an officer. They lived there free of change, but they were always very polite and very nice. They thanked us and would even flirt with my aunt. But you had to be very careful what you talked about.

That civilian society in which you lived was largely devoid of men in their active years?

BERKOVITZ: The same in the Gentile community. Only older men and boys. The others were in the regular army. I always felt very bad that my father wasn't around. One of the happiest moments in our life was when my father made it home. His whole battalion walked home from Kiev and he was discharged. When he came back, we were very happy, even though he had lost his job.

These anti-Jewish policies begin to affect you as soon as Ruthenia was annexed by Hungary. Didn't you have any premonition that very bad things were going to happen?

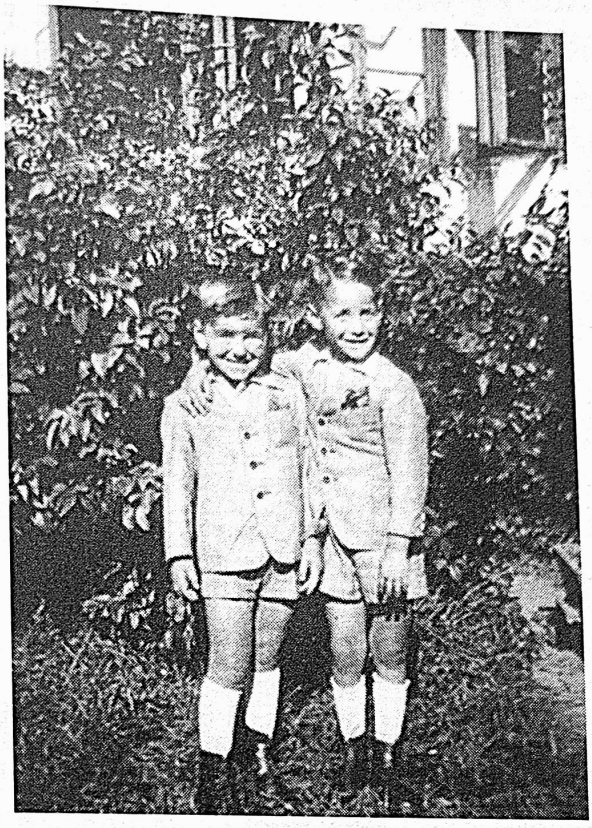
BERKOVITZ: My father was very pessimistic, but even so, there was no place to go. In 1939, he had gotten in touch with some people in England through his firm, and he was given a visa to go to London, a visa only for himself, not for his family. And he decided that he didn't want to go alone. My grandfather's sister lived in Los Angeles, and she sent affidavits to the two young boys, my young uncles—they were twenty and twenty-seven—so they could come to the United States. They made preparations to go—this was around 1939—but my grandparents decided that it would be too difficult to conduct the business without them and decided they shouldn't leave.

Of course, very few people could know where these anti-Jewish measures would lead.

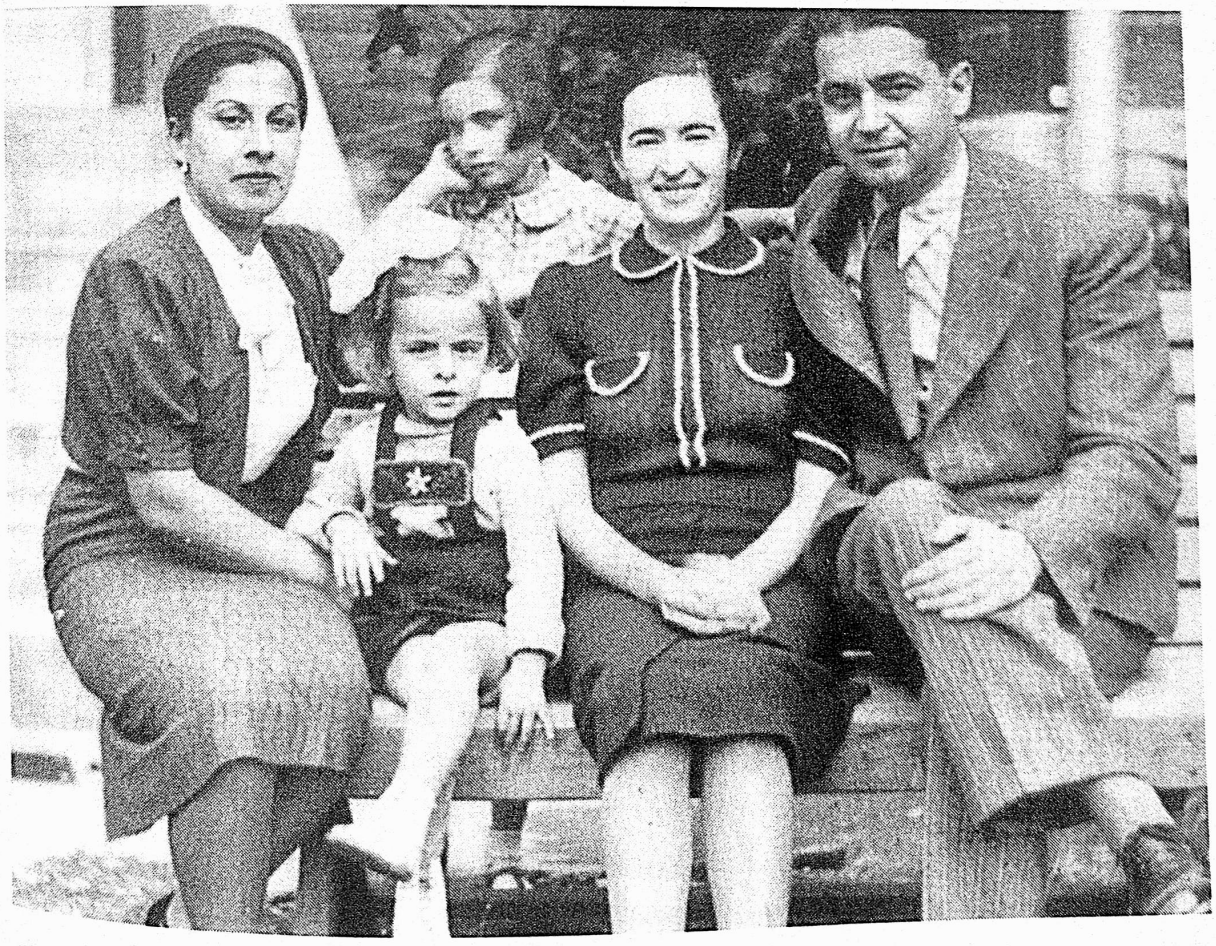
BERKOVITZ: The first inkling I had was when my father walked home from the Ukraine in a Hungarian labor battalion in January 1944. He came back with stories about people having to dig their own graves before they were shot. He told this to my grandfather. I wasn't supposed to hear, but my bedroom was next to the room in which these conversations took place. When I think of it now, I just remember how scared I was. And I remember my grandfather saying that such things could not happen in Hungary.

Did the Jews believe that [the regent Admiral Miklós] Horthy would protect them?

BERKOVITZ: Well, they believed that the whole infrastructure would protect them. And apparently they were not that wrong, at least until March 1944.



Gavriel Salvendy, right, with his brother Jancsi. Photo taken in front of their house in Rimavska Sobota.



Anna Weiszhauz Berkovitz (standing) with her parents in Bustahaza, 1939. (The two on the left are family friends.)

Demeter Pista and Kati, Gentiles who were instrumental in saving the lives of Gavriel Salvendy and his family. Pista died in 1976, and Salvendy last visited Kati in 1999, when she was ninety-two years old. Photo taken in 1964.

Group of survivors, July/August 1945, Sweden.
Anna Berkovitz stands, 3rd from right in the 4th row.

Anna Berkovitz
in Sweden,
July/August 1945.

William Melson, né Wulf Mendelssohn,
passing as Count Jan Zamoyski,
Prague, 1944.

Robert Melson and his mother
in Brussels, 1945 or 1946.

and myself—we all made it. Seven out of nine. We were a fairly small family. Many of the Jewish families at that time had four, five, six, and seven children.

Given the circumstances, your family had a remarkable rate of survival.

SALVENDY: Absolutely. No question about it. Nobody, nobody came back the way we came back. Nobody. Nobody. Absolutely nobody.

The Camp of Death: Anna Berkovitz

"Even though Auschwitz was much more horrible than the ghetto, leaving home was the most traumatic thing."

Transportation to the North

With the Soviet armies driving headlong toward the Hungarian frontier, the Nazis made "cleansing" the Jews from Hungary's eastern provinces a top priority. Considering the high concentrations in Ruthenia, they had a field day. But the Germans did not have to act alone. Eichmann recalled that Hungary was the only country where the Germans could not keep up with the local authorities. He said that they got rid of their Jews like sour beer.

ANNA BERKOVITZ: As soon as the Germans arrived, all the Jews were required to wear yellow stars. You were immediately arrested if you were caught without one. I remember my aunt and my grandmother cutting out some materials and putting Jewish stars on the backs and fronts of our clothes. The new laws also decreed that the Jews could not leave town. But my grandfather thought I would be better off with my parents in the Carpathian village of Bustahaza, and he hired a taxicab to have me and two other children driven there. The ride through the mountains took about three hours.

When we got there, I was terribly upset because I was missing school. So after a week, I called my aunt in Munkács and told her to talk to the principal and tell him that I would be back soon and that he should get all my assignments from my teachers so I could make up the work I missed. I felt very upset because I was sitting around doing nothing.

On April 1, we were ordered to pack all the belongings we each could in two suitcases and report to the synagogue in the village at nine o'clock the next

morning. My father came home with the news that the police would come for us, and then he ran into the bathroom and threw up. My father was, as I said, very pessimistic, and whenever he got very emotional, he got sick. My mother was better able to handle crises and was like a rock. She told him to calm down and assured him that we would get through this one.

We packed only as many clothes as we could carry. Since we couldn't take jewelry and silverware with us, we tried to hide it. We had a pantry above our basement, and we put some stuff in there. At night our neighbor Kleinmann brought over his wife's jewelry and their silverware, and we put it together with ours in that pantry, and my father and Mr. Kleinmann covered it up with a wall.

While they were working, there was a knock on the door, and I was sent to see who it was. It was the maid from one of our non-Jewish friends, whose Christmas tree I used to help decorate. We were often invited to some of their celebrations. The maid had a handful of pengös, and she said that her mistress felt that we wouldn't need our jewelry anymore, and she thought that maybe we would like to sell it. I slammed the door in her face.

The next morning, the police came, and we went to the synagogue, where we stayed all that day and night. That was the first time I had been to the synagogue. They said that all those who had served on the Russian front would be exempt, but that didn't happen. The only one who got excused was a next-door neighbor, a woman, who was the only pediatrician in the entire area. They also allowed a young woman to remain with her eighty-year-old grandmother, who was dying. But after a week, both the doctor and the granddaughter were taken to the ghetto.

We were put on trains, and after a three- or four-hour ride, arrived in Mátészalka, a collection point in eastern Hungary. When the woman whose grandmother died later joined us there, she told us that after we left, all our homes were immediately looted and were now completely empty.

Did you know what happened to the other Jews back in Munkács?

BERKOVITZ: Because Munkács had a sizeable Jewish population, they designated a whole section of the town as a ghetto. If you already didn't live in that area, you had to move there. My grandparents lived in a part of town that was not designated as a ghetto, so they had to leave their house. I never saw them again.

I still have nightmares about leaving home. Even though Auschwitz was much more horrible than the ghetto, leaving home was the most traumatic thing. I still have this dream in which I'm getting twenty-four hours' notice to pack and leave my home, not knowing where I'm going. I see my parents. I see

the German soldiers. I see the Hungarian soldiers. And I'm saying, "I'm absolutely not going, I'm absolutely not going, I'm going to hide, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, but I'm absolutely not going." I see my old house. I see myself jumping out of the window. I'm trying to escape, but they are coming to get me.

I very seldom dream about the concentration camp. I very seldom dream about my family here in the United States. In my dreams I see my family in Hungary: my grandparents, my mother, my father. I'm reliving the time when we had to leave our home. I see other snatches. I see the German soldiers. I see the Hungarian soldiers. I don't make any distinction between them. I see my school. But now those memories are fading.

Why do you think you dream about these things rather than about Auschwitz?

BERKOVITZ: I really don't know. Perhaps because the camp was so unique and so horrible that I'm blocking it out. Maybe because losing everything—home, family, identity—was such a basic trauma.

What consequences have these unpleasant memories had on your daily living?

BERKOVITZ: No serious consequences. Perhaps I fear new situations more than other people. It's like I'm leading a double life. After I have one of these dreams I always wake and tell my husband. And he tells me one of his "bad dreams," which is such a mild dream that I say, "You consider this a bad dream? When I have a bad dream it really is a bad dream."

What were the conditions like in Mátészalka?

BERKOVITZ: There were so many people who had already been put into the ghetto that they didn't have any more room, so they put the later arrivals in a Jewish cemetery, which had been fenced in. No tents, no facilities, nothing. We had to sit on the gravestones.

I remember going to sleep in that cemetery and looking up at the sky. This was the first time I noticed how beautiful the sky was. I felt I could reach up and touch the millions of stars. Every time I see a sky with stars, I think of this time.

The next morning, my father went into the village and ran into one of his buddies, who had been with him in the labor battalion. The guy was from this town, and he told my father that my father, his family, and friends could move into a big storage area they had under the roof of their house. This was one of

those old-fashioned attics that could be reached only with a ladder from the outside. Eventually about fifty people came to live there.

Was there a shortage of food?

BERKOVITZ: I don't remember being hungry. We had beans, there was community cooking. People cooked outside on open stoves. Sometimes my father and his friend would bring greens and baked bread.

What did you do for sanitation?

BERKOVITZ: It was very primitive, but while we were there some Hungarian policemen came and said they needed a group of women to go and clean the houses that had been confiscated from the Jews. So we volunteered because these houses had bathrooms. But the experience was horrible, because the people who had lived there were now gone. It was spring, and the flowers were blooming, the gardens were beautiful. The houses that we were cleaning were absolutely empty. But I went there because I wanted to take a shower.

We were in that attic for about four weeks when word came that we were going farther into Hungary. They did not tell us that we were being deported to Auschwitz. We were taken in several groups. Since my father was a member of the Jewish council, we were not put on the first transport, but the third or fourth. We are talking about end of May 1944.

At this stage, people were beginning to form really close unions. Families bonding with other families. We had been the neighbors of the Kleinmanns', but hadn't been all that close. Now in the ghetto we became just like one family. Judith Kleinmann, their nine-year-old daughter, and I used to sleep together under one blanket in that attic. So we were planning to stick together with the Kleinmanns. However, Judith Kleinmann came down with the measles. So we had to separate. And that, of course, saved my life.

Had we stuck together, I would have been with my mother and Mrs. Kleinmann and nine-year-old Judith. At Auschwitz they separated the men from the women, and then they separated the women with children from the women without children. If you looked younger than sixteen or older than forty, you went with the women with children. This last group went directly to the gas chambers. If we had not been separated from the Kleinmanns, we would have all been put together and we would have all perished.

But people did not know what was waiting for them. My father's brother and his brother's wife, who lived in Czechoslovakia, had a six-year-old son, whom they had smuggled to his sister and her husband in Hungary. When my

aunt was sent to Auschwitz, she had little Yanik with her, and both went directly to the gas chamber. People didn't give up their children. They naturally wanted to take care of them. But having children with you when you arrived at Auschwitz was a death sentence.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp began before the war as a Polish labor exchange. Later the Polish army commandeered the facilities for soldiers' barracks. The Wehrmacht took over after the invasion of Poland in September, but on April 27, 1940, leased it to the SS for use as a holding pen for recalcitrant Poles pending their transfer to work camps. The new SS owners soon changed the temporary detention center into a permanent concentration camp. Materials at first were in such short supply that camp commander Rudolf Höss even had to scrounge around for enough barbed wire to secure the camp's perimeter. Höss also commissioned the camp's most lasting symbol: the forged-iron entrance gate with the infamous words "Arbeit macht frei" (Work leads to freedom)—a false promise, to be sure, but one that underlined the camp's initial purpose.

The Counting and the Selection

The Auschwitz area, which had not been part of the German Reich since 1457, now became part of the newly created province of Upper Silesia, an area to be cleared of its native inhabitants, exploited for its resources, and prepared for German "resettlement." The concentration camp became a center for the extraction of nearby sand and gravel, raw materials intended for Third Reich building projects. When I. G. Farben decided to build a synthetic rubber plant at nearby Monowitz, it became a major center of forced labor.

The high mortality rate among the slave labor population led to the building of Auschwitz's first crematorium, installed as a hygienic device, not a means of mass murder. The death toll kept pace with the increasing supply of forced labor, especially after the German attack on the Soviet Union brought forth a steady supply of captured Soviet soldiers. However, this source came to an end when

Hermann Göring, as head of the Four-Year Plan, gained control over the POWs. Himmler now had to concentrate on getting his labor from the Jews.

The Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942, cleared the way for the development of an annihilation center, and on July 4, 1942, the first selection upon arrival was held. The annihilation of the Jews became Heinrich Himmler's supreme gift to the ideal of the "Master Race"—more intensely pursued after he was convinced Germany would lose the war. In achieving his goal, he was supported by countless Nazi ideologues, true believers, murderers, and thugs. But help also came from the ordinary people: the civil servants, architects, industrialists, agronomists, chemists, geologists, construction engineers, bookkeepers, and accountants—all those who could view this most horrendous enterprise as a technical problem.

The deportation of the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz began on May 15, 1944. The railroad trip from Mátészalka first went west toward central Hungary then turned north, crossing Slovakia into Greater Germany. From Tarnow the train headed east again through Krakow and then on to Auschwitz. From sub-Carpathian Ruthenia and northern Transylvania 290,000 Jews were evacuated. Transports arrived daily, carrying between two to three thousand Jews, a hundred or more packed into each of the cars. There was only one water bucket and one waste bucket for the entire four-day trip. And no food, save what the deportees managed to bring themselves. The trains bore the deceptive inscription: "German Workers' Resettlement." Thousands died en route before reaching the final destination. Many of these were suicides.

BERKOVITZ: Our reception at Auschwitz [actually the Birkenau section of the camp] was just like the scene recreated in the film *Schinder's List.* It was an absolute insane asylum, an absolute madhouse. Dogs barking, people screaming, Germans shouting, people shoving. It was complete pandemonium. The only thing that we understood were the orders for the men to go in one line and the women in the other. My father looked at me and at my mother. She was wearing a black kerchief around her head, and my father ripped off the kerchief and told her to put it around my head. And that's the last time I ever saw my father. I had two long braids, and I put the kerchief over them, and the Germans never asked me how old I was.

It was around five o'clock. The sun was just going down, and we were marched down a road with barbed-wire fences on both sides. Behind the barbed wire were trees and people, weird-looking people with shaven heads and ill-fitting clothes. Aberrations. And they were screaming at us, "Throw us your purses, throw us your bundles." And I thought, "Who are these people? What are they? And why are they were asking us to give them the food that we might still be carrying?"

And then we went to the bath, which was adjacent to the crematorium. Two lines of men and women with hair clippers and razors were waiting for us, and we were immediately told to take off all our clothes and keep only our shoes. They even tore away our underwear and our socks. Everything. Then we joined one of these two lines and they shaved us. I turned to my mother and my mother turned me. And seeing my mother like that I burst into tears. That was the only time I cried in Auschwitz. Now I understand how it must have also felt for her to see me like that.

Then we were taken to the showers and locked in, and they turned on the water. A trickle of cold water, just enough to feel wet and sticky. There was no soap and no towels. Nothing. And when they opened the door and we came out, they handed us each a dress. A piece of cloth really. Some tall people got a tiny dress, some short people got something that hung down to their ankles. And that was what we wore from then on.

By this time it was night, and the glow from the flames climbing from the chimneys of the crematoria lit up the sky. The smell was awful. And we said, "It smells like garbage. They must be burning our suitcases and our clothes." But there was a Jewish Slovak girl, one of the *kapos* [prisoner section chiefs], who came to us and said, "Hungarian Jews, you ate chicken paprika while we were suffering. You came through the door, you'll go out through the chimney. You think they are baking bread over there? Those are your parents and your sisters burning."

Then they marched us to C-Lager [the women's section], but they had no room for us there, so they moved us into the latrines. The room had three long rows of cement seats, with between two to three hundred holes. That's where we sat all night. I spent my first night in the ghetto in a cemetery; I spent my first night in Auschwitz in a latrine.

The second night they divided us into groups and shoved us into various barracks, which housed between eight hundred to one thousand people. Twelve to sixteen women slept on bunk beds meant to hold only four. You couldn't

stretch out and had to sleep on your side. If you got up at night to go to the *Scheisskübel* (shit bucket), you would not have a place when you returned.

What was your routine?

BERKOVITZ: They'd wake us every morning at about four o'clock, and we'd have about an hour of darkness in which to mill around and talk before we were lined up for counting. We then returned to the barracks and were locked up all day with nothing to do.

We got food once a day. We would sit on our cots, and they would dole it out from a cooking pot resting on a cart: one piece of bread per person and some watery brew, which sometimes contained bits of cabbage or turnips. People drank from the pot the best they could and passed it around. If you were the first one you got as much soup to drink as you could possibly slurp down in a hurry. If you were the last one, you might have received nothing.

The soup had a very chemical flavor, and it was rumored that they put something in it to stop the women from menstruating. So we were convinced that we were being sterilized. Nobody, in fact, menstruated at Auschwitz. I later learned that when people are starving, they stop menstruating because they lack the proper amount of body fat. Women need a certain amount of estrogen stored in body fat to menstruate. But not having periods at Auschwitz was really a blessing, because it would have been just awful as far as sanitation was concerned. When we were rescued and regained our normal body weight, we began menstruating again. Whatever happened was not permanent, but of course we did not know that at the time.

The first three or four days, I couldn't eat that food, that soup tasted so awful. But when people get really hungry, they can eat anything, even grass, if they can find any. If you lost too much weight, and your ribs started to show, you would get "selected out." They would have a "selection" two or three times a day. They would drive a truck up to the entry of the barracks, and the German guards would have you come forward and take off all of your clothes. They looked at you, and as soon as your bones started showing, you went straight onto the truck without any clothes. You just went. So you had to eat the food and try not to get diarrhea, because then you would become dehydrated and get emaciated much quicker. The prisoners called one who got emaciated "Musselman"[1] and stayed away. It was as if that person were a ghost, a living-dead person who would infect the others. If you started to get sick, they would send you to the infirmary, where your chances of survival decreased even more. So you avoided the infirmary at any cost.

You remember I told you that Judy Kleinmann had become infected with measles. Well, I got the measles in Auschwitz. I ran a very high fever and was very sick, but I didn't go to the infirmary. I stood for the counting and the selection, and I survived. I didn't even have an aspirin.

Death at Auschwitz was merely a question of time. Each day, day after day, you lived from one hour to the next. Luckily, when we were in C-Lager there was no epidemic, no typhus, as there was in other areas of the camp.

Did you ever look at people and speculate on their chances of survival?

BERKOVITZ: We were not speculating, but you could tell which people were determined to survive and which ones were lethargic and very depressed.

Was there any suicide?

BERKOVITZ: Maybe one or two occasions, but there wasn't much of it in C-Lager. Killing yourself, though, was very easy. All you had to do was to touch the wires. Generally, people did want to survive, but based on past experiences and personality you couldn't tell who. My mother, for example, was not terribly aggressive and had lived a very protected life. She was this old-fashioned European lady, very gentle and very delicate, a homemaker who had to be protected against the least little breeze. She was not the type of person that you would have suspected could have survived under such circumstances.

That there was a higher percentage of women who died in the camps than men has often been taken to suggest that the Nazis wanted to select out the women faster than men. Do you have any reflections on that?

BERKOVITZ: I really don't know whether that was true or not. But since the selection process was conditioned by the amount of calories given to us—I heard 600–700 calories a day—it would have been very easy to do. But I really don't know for sure. They also punished us for the slightest infractions. For example, when the count didn't tally, they would say, "no soup tonight."

Why would the count not check out? Were there any attempts to escape?

BERKOVITZ: Oh no, there were no attempts to escape, but people were going from one barracks to the next because they met somebody they knew or their partner was selected out, and they wanted to be with someone else. You were not registered in your block, and there was continuous fluctuation. Eventually, though, they would adjust the count within the whole camp, but that always took time.

Aside from being with your mother, and for a short time your mother's sister, you were surrounded entirely by strangers. How did you establish relationships with any of these people? Did you depend on any of them for survival?

BERKOVITZ: My biggest strength, the main reason for my survival, was my mother. She really protected me. We'd each get one slice of bread, but she would always give me some of hers. But people who were completely alone tended to form very close relationships with others. There were mother-daughter relationships with people who were not mother and daughter, or sister relationships with people who weren't sisters. It was very, very important to have these pseudo-families or replacement families, because if you were alone, you gave up very easily. It was extremely difficult not to give up.

Even given the horrible circumstances, you might say you were fortunate?

BERKOVITZ: That's right. We did not advertise the fact that we were mother and daughter. People near us knew, but the people in authority didn't know because they hadn't bothered to take our names.

Did these nuclear surrogate families ever branch out into extended surrogate families?

BERKOVITZ: No. People might know others from their same town, but they usually didn't make relationships with many strangers. People were so busy surviving that they really did not have excess energy to form new relationships. At Auschwitz people were coming and going all the time, and they just did not have the emotional strength to form an attachment and then see that person disappear.

Was there fear that if you didn't watch your bread very carefully, somebody would steal it?

BERKOVITZ: Yes, absolutely. We slept with the bread under our heads. People were surviving for themselves and stole all the time. We could constantly feel hands searching for our food to steal, but I never saw any physical fighting or pushing or shoving or real arguments. You would think that women would get nasty with their tongues and curse at each other, but I don't remember any of this.

Was there any organization or leadership among the prisoners?

BERKOVITZ: It was impossible. In Auschwitz you were shifted back and forth, and there was continuous coming and going and selection. The Germans determined the leaders. In each barrack there was a *Block Älteste Vertreterin* (senior

block representative), who was usually a young Jewish Slovak woman. Some of these had been there two or three years prior to our arrival. They had managed to survive and achieve the exalted position of "head of the barracks."

They lived in an area separated from the rest of the barrack by a partition. They had beds with sheets, a table and chairs, a stove, and pots and pans and dishes. It was hardly a normal environment, but certainly a more "civilized" one than that of the rest of the people. They didn't eat the same food. Their food was delivered to them when the rest of us were supposed to be asleep. But if you weren't sleeping, you could smell the food cooking in their room.

Did the block representatives treat you badly?

BERKOVITZ: I cannot make a blanket statement; it depended on their personalities. Some of them just did their job like any might do under other very difficult circumstances, doing whatever had to be done. They got us up, chased us out for the count, and kept order. But others were extremely cruel, going around with rubber truncheons and beating people, making people afraid of them.

Did any of these block representatives get "selected"? They weren't really safe, were they?

BERKOVITZ: The plan was eventually to get rid of them too. Since there were thirty-two barracks, there were thirty-two *Block Älteste.* Some of them survived, some of them didn't. It depended on where they were sent after they closed down the C-Lager. I happened to know one of them who survived, but we thought that eventually, they would die with the rest of us.

Were there religious practices in the camp?

BERKOVITZ: I did see women praying alone, yes.

Nothing beyond the individual?

BERKOVITZ: No.

Not even two or three people praying together?

BERKOVITZ: No.

Usually people tend to get together to reaffirm their faith. You didn't see any of that?

BERKOVITZ: No, no.

Did the word get around when there was Yom Kippur?

BERKOVITZ: I tell you frankly, I don't remember.

Outside of possible religious and cultural differences, among the prisoners was there anything else that might have produced a feeling of separation?

BERKOVITZ: No.

What about class differences? You came from a very strong bourgeois environment. There were people in the camp who probably came from either higher or lower classes. How did that play itself out?

BERKOVITZ: People tended to make friends pretty much with people from their own class and with those of similar backgrounds. Formation of friendships was tenuous, considering their potential brevity, but there was constant networking. Somebody had a cousin who had a friend who came from a town near the town where one's mother was born, and so forth.

Given the horrors of the camp, would social class be something you noticed after a while?

BERKOVITZ: You couldn't tell by the way people looked, only by their behavior and the language they used.

Were there any political groupings, for example, among communists?

BERKOVITZ: I know what you are driving at, but there was really no sort of organized cohesion within the prison population. You just tried to survive. There was no organization where the strong people gave weaker people support or protection, or where some leaders would tell newcomers how to behave for their own good. There was none of that.

Women were probably more vulnerable than men, who had belonged to more organizations before they came to the camps.

BERKOVITZ: That's probably true, because most of these woman came from a very paternalistic society without any support groups. They were used to authority and not used to taking their lives into their own hands and making decisions. They were not used to standing up for their own rights or protecting or planning for themselves. At least that was true among the people I was near.

The Birkenau camp at which Anna and her mother were located served both as a *Vernichtung* (extermination) and a work center. At its peak in 1943, it held about 100,000 inmates. Most of the

prisoners who were there were eventually gassed; the rest died from starvation, malnutrition, disease, infections, rat bites, infestations of lice, or battery. Nobody took Anna's or her mother's name or assigned them numbers. Why bother with people who would soon be dead? Survival, therefore, frequently depended on happenstance and unforeseen circumstance.

One autumn day, nearby air-raid sirens sounded.

At that period of the war, Allied activity in the sky above the Auschwitz area was not uncommon. About two and a half miles east of the death camp was the I. G. Farben synthetic oil and rubber plant at Monowitz. Auschwitz supplied it with prison labor, both male and female. On April 4, the pilot of a reconnaissance plane looking for industrial targets happened to capture the earliest aerial pictures of Auschwitz. A further surveillance flight on May 31 recorded frames of both Auschwitz and Birkenau. However, the photo evaluation experts were examining war production installations, not barracks, gas chambers, or crematoria. The Allies feared that the Monowitz factory might be producing synthetic fuel to compensate for the natural sources of petroleum lost to the advancing Soviet army. Therefore on August 20, Allied bombers paid the Monowitz complex a visit.

In a poem she wrote in 1996, Anna Berkovitz expressed the hope she had at the time that the planes had come to destroy the death camps.

On That Day in August 1944

It happened on a day in August,
Or so we thought,
As there are no calendars in Hell.
Time creeps interminably on
Blending the days of fear with
The night of flames.

But on that day, there came a glint of hope
As silver missiles streaked the sky
And as the sirens wailed
We huddled and prayed
That the bombs should fall

And after our deaths
The sign "This branch is out of business"
Would go up.

But, then, the sirens stopped
And the sky did not fall
And business in Auschwitz continued as usual.
And Satan laughed
As he re-kindled the flames,
Anticipating much more business yet to come.
"Mach schnell! Mach schnell," he roared,

And I always knew that
The world did not give a damn
On that day in August.

Five days after the initial strike on Monowitz, Allied aerial reconnaissance returned to survey the damage. The photo analysts concluded that further strikes were necessary. These occurred on December 18 and December 26. During that last attack, a number of bombs fell short and hit the SS sick bay at Auschwitz-Birkenau, killing five of the patients. This was the only time the death camp was bombed.

BERKOVITZ: One morning, as we were milling around waiting for roll call, we met some people from Munkács. We tried to find out news of my grandparents but were unsuccessful. But one woman told us that my mother's sister was in another barrack here at Auschwitz. So we met my mother's sister. She asked us to come and stay with her; and we moved from block 14, where we were first put, to block 9, where my mother's sister stayed. (I already told you that in that extermination camp people moved from one barrack to the next.) But every day there was still a selection.

One day the Germans came into our new barrack, and they said, "We need workers, do we have any volunteers?" Now, my mother's unspoken philosophy was to be as faceless as possible: try not to do anything to stand out, don't volunteer for anything. But my aunt had a different personality, and before we knew it, she jumped off her bunk and said, "I volunteer."

It happened that they were preparing the camp immediately adjacent to us for gypsies. And my aunt was put to work in the gypsy-camp kitchen. That was

a good place to be. She got word to us where she was, and she made arrangements to meet us every morning to give us some scraps of food: a couple of potatoes, a couple of carrots, a turnip, whatever she could get. Sometimes she threw it to us, sometimes it got lost. But we got it enough times that all of a sudden we became healthier. And we also had a currency that we could use for barter.

We made a deal with a woman, actually a distant cousin, who was over in the workers' barracks. We would share our food with her, and she would arrange for us to get jobs and live in block 12, the workers' barracks. Consequently, we became *Scheisskommandos,* those people who went back and forth with buckets filled with human excrement from the latrines. This job meant that we were outside all day long and not in the barracks; and we therefore avoided the selections.

That's what saved our lives. When all the women in C-Lager were being exterminated, those in the workers' barracks managed to survive. When we arrived, that camp had about 34,000 women, who were constantly being replaced with new arrivals as they died or were killed off. But by November, when we left, there were only about 200 people left, mostly those in the workers' block 12.

And all the others had been murdered ?

BERKOVITZ: I would say 95 percent of them or more. [Of the approximately four million persons believed to have perished at Auschwitz, 400,000 were Hungarian Jews.] And so we stayed in the workers' barracks until all the prisoners in the rest of the camp were gone.

One night they backed up the truck to the entrance of our barracks, and we thought our time had come. We were marched down to the truck, and then they took us to another camp, right adjacent to the crematorium, and we got selected and selected and selected. This continued until the end of November 1944, when one day those who remained were put on a train which left Auschwitz. We didn't go to such a wonderful place, we went to Ravensbrück, but we had left Auschwitz and in a railroad car.

They Talked about Recipes

Ravensbrück, located about sixty miles north of Berlin on the shores of Lake Schwedt, near the small town of Fürstenberg, was the Third Reich's only camp exclusively for women. During its six years of operation, a total of 132,000 women and children

passed through, of which 92,000 perished. The prisoners came from all occupied countries, the largest national group being 33,000 from Poland. The major labor activity was making SS uniforms, but the camp also provided slave labor for factories throughout Germany. Ravensbrück was also known for its sadistic medical experiments. At the end of 1944, the camp, already seriously overcrowded, burgeoned with new arrivals from the evacuated Polish camps. The rate of killing increased. New gassing equipment was installed and a third oven added to the crematorium. When this proved inadequate to handle the supply of corpses, they were trucked elsewhere or were burned alongside the road with flame throwers.

What happened to your aunt?

BERKOVITZ: My aunt stayed in Auschwitz. We didn't see her again until 1976, over thirty years later. She remained working in the kitchen until Auschwitz was liberated by the Russians on January 22, 1945.

On November 26, 1944, Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler had ordered the SS detachment at Auschwitz-Birkenau to begin the destruction of the gas chambers and crematoria in order to obliterate all the evidence of mass murder. The last of the crematoria, number 5, was blown up just two days before the Red Army arrived. By then, a policy of evacuation had replaced the one of mass murder. Some 60,000 inmates were sent west, mostly through forced marches, which for many became death marches. Even with the relentless advance of the Allied and Soviet armies, the Nazis continued to move the survivors of their prison camps around to prevent their enemies from liberating these witnesses of the Final Solution. Also, in these last months of the war, the need for slave labor increased. Convinced that the Jews were subhuman, the Nazis willingly implemented any policy that could prolong their suffering and further the war effort of the Third Reich.

When they liberated the camps, the Soviets found about 5,800 sick prisoners alive in the Birkenau compound; in Auschwitz, only 600; and at the satellite camp of Zazole, another 1,200. They also discovered the belongings of those who had perished: 348,820

men's suits, 38,00 pairs of men's shoes, 836,255 women's dresses, 5,525 women's shoes, vast quantities of eyeglasses and false teeth, and seven tons of human hair.

BERKOVITZ: We stayed at Ravensbrück for three weeks and underwent interminable selections. My mother was a frail little woman; I was a fourteen-year-old kid. I don't know how we ever passed through all these selections, but somehow we did.

Then we were sent to work in one of the Krupp/Essen factories in eastern Germany, near Magdeburg [eighty-five miles west of Berlin]. We were extremely lucky because we were among the few who didn't have to walk west on foot. Why they picked us to ride on trains, I don't know. You can interpret it any way you like: fate, God, whatever. The only thing that I can say is that if you gave up, you didn't survive. But that didn't mean that everybody who refused to give up survived.

Were the conditions better here than at Auschwitz?

BERKOVITZ: We were housed in a prison, which had about 300 or 400 German prisoners, 200 Polish women workers, and then about 200 Jews. We were in a concrete building that had bars on the windows and cells with doors that locked. It was a regular German prison. And we got the same treatment as the other prisoners. There were two people to a bunk rather than fourteen or sixteen. My mother and I got a bunk to ourselves. We were given a blanket for the two of us, and the bed had straw, which eventually filled with lice, but, anyway, it was our bunk and it was our blanket. There was also a stove in the cell, and we did have some wood.

All the overseers were Germans, of course. But there was no selection. You didn't sit around in the barracks all day waiting for a selection with this continuous fear of death, although we still dreaded being sent back to Auschwitz. We were told that we would never get out of there, and there was every evidence to support that.

You didn't know that Auschwitz was liberated?

BERKOVITZ: No. There were rumors that if you got sick they would send you back to Auschwitz. And once I did get sick, I had pneumonia, and I was put into the infirmary, where I had a bunk to myself and even some sheets on the bed. I was there for one day, when somebody told me that the next day they were going to empty the infirmary, so I insisted that I was ready to go back to work. "No, no," they told me, "you're too sick, you stay here." And I thought that meant that they were really going to empty the place, and I struggled back to work.

The factory was terrible and awful, but somehow you had the feeling that if you kept on going and did the work long enough, maybe the war would end and you would make it.

We were mixed in with the other prisoners and worked the same as they did. We worked all day, a twelve-hour shift. My mother and I ended up working in different areas of the factory, my mother on the day shift and I on the night shift. Lots of times we didn't see each other. When she was coming home, I was going to work. But we had Sunday off. That's when we saw each other.

We walked to work. The factory was an underground airplane factory, located in an old salt mine. It was a long march back and forth, and we went through tunnels and up and down the stairs when the elevators didn't work. But we were not beaten, and the work was not hard.

It was winter, and we got no warm clothes. We just had one dress, no sweater, and no underwear. The fact that it was underground saved our lives because we didn't march very long above ground; so it wasn't as cold as it could have been otherwise.

Every morning we would get up around 4:00 or 4:30, and then we were counted and the day shift started at 7:00. It was a long process. When we got back from the factory, we got our one meal of the day. Mostly watery soup, but there was more cabbage in the soup than at Auschwitz, and we got two slices of bread. Still, it was very little food, and eventually we would have starved to death. Fortunately we did not stay there long enough.

You were always very hungry?

BERKOVITZ: We were always very hungry, but a couple of times, I got a potato from the kitchen, and we would bake it on the stove in the cell. Those were probably the best meals I had during that year.

Did this increase your hope of survival?

BERKOVITZ: Yes.

How did your jailers distinguish among the different nationalities?

BERKOVITZ: Everybody had different stripes on their clothes running down the middle of their backs. The Jews had a yellow stripe. The Poles had a green stripe, and the Germans had a black stripe. The Germans were either criminals or political prisoners, mostly the latter. The Poles were forced labor, but they were not Jewish.

What kind of job were you doing?

BERKOVITZ: I was assigned to a French woman, a "civilian," who had volunteered to work in Germany. We sat at big table doing electronic wiring, winding thin copper wire on a spool for some part of an airplane. We would wind the wire with the help of a machine. We were communicating in German, and she wanted to hear my story. I told her about Auschwitz and everything. She was not mean or anything, but she never gave me anything, never a piece of bread or a cookie or anything, never any such help.

My mother was also assigned to a civilian, to an Italian who was really terrific. He would always bring my mother leftovers, some pieces of vegetables and bread and occasionally cake, and then my mother would bring it "home." Sometimes there was even a piece of chicken. So these "civilians" knew about what was happening to the Jews.

These "civilians" were quartered outside the prison?

BERKOVITZ: Yes, they could come and go. They were not prisoners like us.

Did you feel that this job was your key to survival, insofar as you were doing essential war work?

BERKOVITZ: Absolutely. In Auschwitz our hope was that we would be given some work which would make us useful so we wouldn't be killed.

Did working together reduce the sense of separation?

BERKOVITZ: In the factory there was more a sense of community than at Auschwitz. This particular prison had about one thousand people, but only two hundred of us were Jewish. All of a sudden, though, the Jews had a common identity. The people with the yellow stripes were my people, and we were a community.

There were no SS guards inside the factory. The guards who marched us to and from the factory were all former Wehrmacht soldiers; they were very benign. Occasionally, an SS-*Aufseherin* (overseer), a woman, would come in, but the German prisoners supervised the daily life. Some of them were actually nice.

Was there any kind of bonding, or did you still have this atomization?

BERKOVITZ: We made friends. There was a girl my age, and my mother sort of adopted her. She would come over to our bunk, and my mother would comfort her. She didn't survive, however.

What did the prisoners talk about?

BERKOVITZ: This is going to shock you. But the women talked about recipes. They would sit around and discuss menus and what they would eat and what they would cook. And people would tell what they had for Friday night dinners, and what it used to be like in their homes. And people would say, "On Saturday we had this and this and this." And they would tell how they prepared the food, down to listing all the ingredients.

You know what I would recall? Just before we were taken in January 1944, I visited my aunt and uncle in Budapest. I was a small-town girl, and I had never seen one of the capital's famous pastry shops. My aunt and uncle took me to one, and although we had very beautiful pastry shops in Munkács, they were nothing like those in Budapest. And my aunt said, "Pick out anything you want." So I picked out about ten different pastries, but I could only eat about two of them and had to leave the rest.

I would think about that tray of pastries over and over. I would remember each pastry and imagine what the ones I didn't eat might have tasted like. I told everybody this story, how I went to this pastry shop, and I had a plate full of pastries, and that I had left most of them there. I would dream about the pastries that I didn't eat.

Did the prisoners talk about family and friends?

BERKOVITZ: I would eavesdrop, and some of the women would talk about their dates, their romances, their boyfriends, their husbands, their weddings, their wedding nights.

Did they talk about sex?

BERKOVITZ: Yes. I was very naive. I wanted to listen to these things that I never heard before, because, you know, in the environment I grew up in, people didn't talk about sex.

Maybe in the environment they grew up in they also didn't talk about these things. Is it possible that the camps released their inhibitions?

BERKOVITZ: That is possible. Conversation went down to the primal things. But I don't remember them talking about their children. I think they were so hurting that they couldn't talk about them. I have to think what my reaction would have been had I been older, and if I had lost my children. I don't think I could have survived. I don't see how people who lost a child could have gotten through it. I think I was able to get through it because I was so immature and naive and hopeful for the future. Also, if I had not had my mother there, I would have been destroyed. But fortunately I had her there.

Do you think you were also the key to your mother's survival?

BERKOVITZ: Yes, our relationship was very important.

You mentioned your hope for the future. Did people ever talk about the future?

BERKOVITZ: I wish I had discussed that with my mother, what she thought and how she felt. But my mother refused to discuss anything with me after we were liberated. She said, "I don't want ever to talk about it again." And she didn't. She started to write a history of our family, but when she got to this period, she couldn't go on.

Was there a greater tendency to help each other in the prison work camp than in Auschwitz?

BERKOVITZ: Yes. For instance, when you washed your dress. You only had one dress, and until it dried you would have to sit inside naked. The only way to dry a dress was for a bunch of people to shake the clothes in the wind so the dampness would evaporate. You needed two friends for that—to take your dress outside and shake it up and down between them so that it could dry. People did that for each other. They might also cuddle each other when they were cold. And when one of the women was dying, my mother helped her, brought her water and so forth.

Did they share food?

BERKOVITZ: My mother did with me.

Did you see more expressions of religion in the work camp than at Auschwitz?

BERKOVITZ: Nothing organized. You knew who the religious people were because the religious people were praying, but that's about it.

When were you evacuated from this camp?

BERKOVITZ: One morning in early April 1945, we lined up to go to work. It was still dark and then it got light and became daytime. It wasn't Sunday, yet we weren't going to work. We didn't know what was going on. Then they said, "Take your blankets, you're going on a trip." We were utterly confused, we didn't know anything, except everybody was going on the trip, not only the Jews, but the Poles and the Germans as well. Had they taken only the Jews, we would have figured they were sending us back to a concentration camp. Then

the rumors started flying that the front was moving, and for the first time we realized that the Allied forces were in Europe and we were being evacuated.

They packed us into cattle wagons on a train. We began somewhere near Magdeburg and went toward Hamburg. If you look at the map, you can see that distance would be about a three-hour train trip, but we were on that train for ten days. We were constantly moving, staying in railroad sideyards, moving an hour or two and then standing still. With no water or food, people started dying. And the stench was just awful. And when we finally stopped—I don't know where—and they opened up the doors, my mother could not get up and had to be lifted off the wagon.

We left the blankets in the car, and my mother was shivering, and I asked the German *Aufseherin* [guard] if I could go back and get the blanket, and she said, "Where you're going you won't need any blankets."

They led us to a clearing in the woods and made us stand there. We were surrounded with machine guns. Some women were allowed to go with a guard to get some water at a nearby well, and when they came back, they told us that they saw piles of bodies in the nearby woods. Thousands of dead prisoners. We were sure that they were going to shoot us right then and there.

That's the only time—coming back to your questions of organized religion—that's the only time I remember women getting together and saying a prayer for the dead.

And then we saw a convoy coming, Germans on motorcycles and a couple of trucks. And they lined us up. When the convoy arrived, they started giving us handfuls of noodles and each person got a handful of sugar. I remember eating the dry noodles and licking the sugar. And we got back on the train.

There was a woman about my mother's age who had a daughter about my age. They were with us in the same wagon. And the girl had just died, and I remember the mother holding the body of her daughter, picking out and eating the grains of sugar from the dead girl's hair.

Now, rumor had it—there were always rumors—that the commander who was in charge of this transport had been given orders to shoot us, but he had refused to do so and went to the village to find food, and the only thing he could find for us to eat was some noodles and some sugar, and he brought those back and put us again on the trains. And we started moving again.

We ended up in Neuengamme, something like twenty miles from Hamburg, where we were put into one of its concentration camps. It was night. We were so hungry that we went around picking the buds from the trees to eat.

The concentration camp of Neuengamme had been established in 1940 as a forced labor camp for political prisoners primarily from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. About 90,000 passed through the camp; less than half survived. Neuengamme was also used for medical experiments, the most notorious of which was one carried out on twenty-five Jewish children between the ages of six and twelve who were transported there from Auschwitz. The children were injected with tubercular bacilli, purportedly to study the means of a cure. On April 20 (Hitler's birthday), with the British army a short distance away, the twenty survivors of this experiment were all given morphine shots and then hanged.

The camp was by then in the process of liquidation, with some of the prisoners allowed to return to Denmark and Norway. The deal was brokered by Count Folke Bernadotte with Heinrich Himmler. A last contingent of ten thousand regular prisoners was taken away just before the camp was liberated, loaded on three ships, and sent out to sea. On May 3 a squadron of RAF Typhoons mistakenly sunk all ships. Of the Neuengamme contingent, only two thousand survived.

BERKOVITZ: In the middle of the night, the SS came shouting, "Alle heraus, Juden heraus, nur Juden, Juden, Juden heraus, Juden heraus" (everybody out, Jews out, only Jews, Jews get out). They put us back on the train, just the Jews this time. Now we were sure we were going to be murdered, because our insurance policy—the Poles and the Germans—was no longer with us. Women prayed out loud. I fell asleep. Then I was suddenly awakened by a big commotion, and I heard languages I did not understand. I was sure I was back in a concentration camp, because there you heard every sort of language. And then they opened up the doors, and we saw ambulances and nurses and Red Cross signs all over. We were in Denmark. Folke Bernadotte had made a pact with the Germans to trade a wagonload of food for a wagonload of Jews. It was May 1, 1945.

The day before, just after three o'clock in the afternoon, Hitler had solemnly bid farewell to those still in his Berlin bunker. Then, accompanied by Eva Braun, whom he had married the previous day, he retired to his private quarters, where he bit into a glass ampoule of cyanide.[2] His wife then killed herself with the same

poison. Earlier he had dictated his last will, in which he claimed that neither he nor anyone else in Germany had wanted the war against Britain and the United States.

"Centuries will pass away," he explained, "but out of the ruins of our towns and monuments hatred will grow against those finally responsible for everything, international Jewry and its helpers."[3] Hitler boasted that he had made these real culprits pay for their guilt "by more humane means than war."

On May 1, at 10 P.M., Radio Hamburg announced that Hitler had died "fighting against Bolshevism to his last breath." The formal surrender of the Third Reich now became the responsibility of Hitler's designated successor, Admiral Karl Dönitz.

On the morning of May 7, just past midnight, the instrument of capitulation (for all German forces either fighting or facing the Allies) was signed at a schoolhouse near General Eisenhower's headquarters in Rheims, France. It came into effect twenty hours later, and the members of the last Nazi government were arrested. In his testament Hitler had charged his successors with upholding "the race laws to the limit and to resist mercilessly the poisoner of all nations, International Jewry."

Notes

1. This death-camp expression meaning "Muslim" to describe a prisoner near death supposedly came from the stereotypical shaking hands and bent posture of Muslims at prayer.
2. The autopsy performed by the Soviets shortly after they captured the *Führerbunker* revealed the presence of a crushed ampoule of cyanide in the charred remains of Hitler's jaw. However, there is also evidence of a gunshot wound to his head. Perhaps Hitler shot himself while crunching down on the poison, or Eva Braun, no stranger to firearms, gave him the coup de grâce before her own suicide.
3. See Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 794.

I went there to see our former head housekeeper, the person who was responsible for the total management and networking of our hiding. He was still alive, and I wanted to see him. And it was very interesting how grateful he was that I came, how delighted he was to see me. I never will forget that happiness and delight. It was as if I were his long-lost grandchild. The compassion and love that came from this person was magnificent. And then I met a number of other people there who knew my father. But they were very distant and gave me an extremely cool reception. Not hatred, but more like "so what."

How did you let your children know what happened to you?

SALVENDY: When they were smaller, I got a special book during Passover that talked about the Holocaust and about the Jewish holidays. And when they were young, as part of the seder, I always would discuss some of the things I had been through, increasingly adding details as they grew older. They became more and more interested. But I would say my daughter's probably more interested than my son.

So what does being a Jew mean to you?

SALVENDY: Oh, that's a long talk, that's a never-ending one. I don't think I'm going to touch that.

Today Is a Second Life: Anna Berkovitz

"I didn't talk about my past because my only wish was to be like everybody else."

Part of the Russian Quota

Members of the Red Cross took Anna and her mother and the convoy's other Jewish women by car and then by boat to Sweden. They arrived at the port of Malmö and were sent to a reception area, where they were showered, disinfected, given fresh clothes, and transferred to a sanitarium, where they stayed for about a month. They lived in a quarantined area and were nourished on special diets of oatmeal, chicken soup, applesauce, and toast.

ANNA BERKOVITZ: We were very upset about the bland food because we wanted to eat a lot of food that wasn't good for us at that time. A group of the women

actually raided the kitchen, and the Swedes were absolutely shocked at their behavior. But our hosts were really wonderful. Groups of doctors came to the compound to examine people and ordered hospitalization for some of them. My mother still couldn't walk, but actually recovered quite well, as, indeed, did most of the rest of us.

We always felt that the Swedes would give us a permit to stay, but they certainly did not encourage us to do so and, in fact, facilitated our plans eventually to leave.

About two or three days after their arrival, Anna's mother wrote to an aunt who had lived in Los Angeles for the past thirty-six years. The aunt had been recently widowed and had no children; she believed that all her family in Czechoslovakia had perished in the Holocaust and was therefore excited to receive her niece's letter. She immediately wrote back. Anna's mother did not want to return to Czechoslovakia—the Ruthenian part had now been incorporated into the Soviet Union—and not being an ardent Zionist, she hesitated about going to Palestine. On the strength of this encouraging response from her aunt and on what she decided was best for her daughter, she decided to go to the United States.

BERKOVITZ: Life in Palestine was very insecure then, and I think that my mother was understandably tired of struggle and not ready for further hardships. It was not even clear at that time whether there would be an Israel. My mother had cousins in Israel who told her how difficult things were. I would probably have opted to go to Palestine because I felt that, having suffered as a Jew, I should fight to establish my Jewish identity and work for the creation of a Jewish state. And probably I would have been just as happy going there as to the United States. But my mother thought I would be better off in the United States, where I would have a better future and more opportunity. It was as simple as that.

By July 1945, we received our affidavits and applied for our visas. We were considered part of the Russian quota, which was then quite open. But we had to wait until my mother was strong enough to go to the American consulate in Göteborg for her interview and physical examination. When we finally did go, about five girls carried her up the stairs, and then she managed to walk from where they put her down into the immigration office. After the formalities were over, she walked out the door, and was carried back down the stairs and returned to the infirmary.

My aunt had sent us seven hundred dollars for transportation, and we waited until we got space on a ship to come over, which was scheduled to depart on March 26, 1946. By then my mother was well enough to walk. We landed at New York, where we were met by an uncle who lived in Cleveland.

Before we left we had gotten in touch with him and told him the time and date of our arrival and asked him to please come and pick us up. We did not realize that Cleveland was that far from New York, and that he would have to take off work to meet us. Anyway, he came and drove us back to Cleveland, where we stayed for about a week before catching the train for Los Angeles. We arrived in Los Angeles on April 8, 1946.

When we were in Europe, we thought that everybody in the United States was a millionaire. But when we moved here, we found out that everybody was not rich, especially my mother's aunt, who had very modest means. As a matter of fact, she was living alone in a hotel room and had no place to put us. She made arrangements for us to stay in the home of some relatives until my mother was able to get a job and could get an apartment of her own.

We arrived on a Saturday, and the next Monday my mother began looking for work. She had no profession and didn't speak the language, but she managed to find work in a Jewish bakery, where she worked for the next twenty-five years, eventually becoming its manager.

It became clear to me that you can lose everything, but the only thing that they cannot take away from you is a skill or profession. My mother had neither, but she was determined that I should get an education to prepare myself for a better life.

Anna's mother and aunt shared an apartment, while Anna became an au pair, helping to baby-sit a family friend's two small children. Sam Green, a friend of her great-aunt, registered her at the local high school and encouraged her academically. He became her surrogate father.

BERKOVITZ: I started in the ninth grade. I had just turned sixteen, so I was about a year older than the rest of the class. But I finished the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades in two years. I was practically a straight-A student; I got a B only in English literature.

It was awkward at first. The first day, we stood in line to sign up for classes, and a girl next to me asked, "Who's teaching the course?" And I thought that she was asking me, "Who's taking the course?" and I said, "I am." So she started

Anna Berkovitz and her mother, Sweden, January/February 1946.

Robert Melson's mother, Nina, Prague, 1944, after she had assumed the identity of Countess Janina Zomoyska.

Robert Melson and his family in Antwerp on the day they emigrated for the United States in 1947. From left, Willy, Nina, Richi, Bobi, and Ilona, a friend.

laughing. But she became one of my best friends, and I developed a circle of friends with the girls very easily. I had more difficulty with the boys, though.

I felt they were very immature and childish. So I didn't develop any relationship with any of the boys in school, only with the girls. As a matter of fact I have kept up with some of those girls throughout my adult life.

Were they curious about your past?

BERKOVITZ: I didn't talk about my past because my only wish was to be like everybody else. Nobody knew anything about my background. They just knew that I was from Czechoslovakia, that's all.

I pushed myself. I went to school during the day. I took night classes. I went to summer school, and then Sam tutored me in math, and I became a math major. High school was academically very rewarding. I was in the Honor Society. I don't think I was particularly smart, I just worked hard and I succeeded.

Did you already know English?

BERKOVITZ: I picked it up as I went along. But as you see, I haven't lost my accent, and I was only sixteen.

Socially I was not very happy because I was not part of the "in group." I didn't adjust particularly well to mixed company. I was very politically aware, and most of the girls and the boys only seemed interested in sports and silly things like that. I was interested in a career. Some of the girls who became my friends, though, were more serious, but serious girls in high school are not the popular girls.

That bothered you?

BERKOVITZ: More emotionally than intellectually. I wanted to graduate as fast as I could. My dream was to go to UCLA. My parents always wanted me to go to the university, and I always wanted to be a physician. But I started out studying pharmacy because you can always get a job as a pharmacist. I soon transferred to biology with a microbiology major, however.

It was difficult to get into UCLA; the competition was very stiff—at that time there was a huge influx of veterans—and the course of study was difficult. I was absolutely overwhelmed, especially by the impersonality of the place. There were five hundred people in a chemistry course, with no help sessions, no quizzes, and no homework. If you came to lecture, it was fine. If you didn't come to lecture, it was fine. But at exam time they expected you to know the material. I didn't know how to study, how to apportion my time, how to be a mature student. My first semester I got straight Cs, which completely devastated me.

Then I caught on, and from then on I got straight As. I made Phi Beta Kappa, and I graduated in three and a half years with highest honors. By the time I reached my junior year, I had only small classes, always with the same students, mostly microbiology majors. I began to know the professors, they knew me, and my classmates knew me. I really enjoyed my last two years, and I did phenomenally well. I would get something like 99 percent on a test, when the next-highest grade would be 65. I think I graduated number one in the class.

Do you think this success was due only to hard work? Many students who work hard don't have the success you did.

BERKOVITZ: It was a constant struggle between the rational and the emotional. Between the things that you feel you want to do and those things you feel you have to do because it's in your long-range interest. Sometimes you don't want to stay home on a Saturday night and study, but you think that is the right thing to do because you have to do well on the test, and staying home is more important than going out and relaxing with a date. I gave you a trivial example, but the important thing is having a big goal in mind and working toward that goal.

Do you think the kind of success you demanded of yourself was related to the experiences that you had during the war?

BERKOVITZ: No, it was directly related to my original upbringing, related to the values of my father and my mother, who expected me to be successful. When I was a little girl, I remember asking my mother: "Mother, what would you do if I couldn't possibly do all these things you want me to do?" And she just smiled and she said, "Well, you can do these things."

As far as my mother was concerned, getting a university education was the pinnacle. After that, the number-one thing was to get married and have a family. When I wanted to continue my education, she felt that there were other things besides studying.

Most of my classmates were in pre-med, and that was what I wanted to do also. But I felt that I could not put such a financial burden on my mother. And I followed the advice of my adviser, a female professor of microbiology, who told me that I should go out and get a job and save enough money to go to medical school later on. My mother agreed, but Sam Green was very, very upset. He thought I should stick with it and start going to medical school right then and there. In retrospect I should have done that.

That was a big mistake?

BERKOVITZ: For my career? Oh, yes. Maybe for my life it wasn't, but for my career it was. Today I'm advising all my women students not to break their education. Once you leave school and get involved in other things, it's extremely difficult to go back.

While you were going to school in Los Angeles, were you in contact with the Jewish community there?

BERKOVITZ: No. We never became a member of a synagogue or anything.

Your mother wasn't very religious, was she?

BERKOVITZ: No, she wasn't, and she was, if anything, completely isolated. I think that being part of a Jewish community reminded her too much of the past.

When she finished UCLA in December 1951 (the B.S. degree was awarded the following June), Berkovitz got a job at the Cedars of Lebanon Medical Research Institute. The work on a cancer research project in the tissue culture laboratory was challenging, but she realized that if she were ever to be given real responsibility, she would have to go to graduate school. However, by then she had met Leonard, her future husband, who was doing a postdoctorate at the California Institute of Technology. After their marriage they lived in Santa Monica, where he had a job at the Rand Corporation. She continued doing tissue cultures until she started having children. She did not return to graduate school until after her youngest son began school. That was thirteen years after graduation from UCLA.

BERKOVITZ: Except for Sam Green, who wanted me to go right on to medical school, Leonard was the first person in my life who encouraged me to go to graduate school. But in those days, you were either a mother or you were a career person. Many women sacrificed careers in favor of motherhood. Most of my friends were mothers. After we were married, we waited almost four years to have our first child, a fact that prompted people to ask what we were waiting for. Even before my youngest son was in kindergarten and I returned to graduate school, I worked part-time, but my mother didn't like it. She thought that I should have subordinated myself completely to my children, which to her meant staying home all the time.

Did you feel somewhat betrayed?

BERKOVITZ: I thought she was very inconsistent, but I would not assert myself because after what we had gone through, I felt I had to do everything not to upset her. I thought that it was my responsibility to keep her happy, and I felt guilty that she hadn't made a life for herself. I resented the fact that she was living her life through me.

She first told me that she would begin dating when I graduated from high school, then she said, "I cannot date until you graduate from college," and then after I graduated from college, she said, "Well, I'm just too old now," which she wasn't. Later, when she was in her seventies, she told me that the reason she didn't remarry was because she had to take care of me. It was a very complex situation.

An Unlimited Capacity for Cruelty

The Berkovitzes came to West Lafayette in 1962, when Leonard accepted a professorship in the mathematics department. Returning to biology was especially difficult for Anna because the Watson-Crick discoveries had so completely changed the field. The genetics that she had learned was now so old-fashioned that she had to audit undergraduate classes to discover the basics of molecular biology. Accepted in the biology department at Purdue University, she began working on a Ph.D. but was ultimately faced with a problem not uncommon to women in general and to faculty wives in particular.

A university town such as West Lafayette provided few opportunities for faculty wives to find academic positions at the same institution as their husbands. Henry Koffler, head of biology, told her that after she got her Ph.D., the likelihood of her getting a tenure-track position in his department was "nil." However, he did offer her a temporary job as an instructor. She took it and decided to go no further than her master's degree.

BERKOVITZ: I enjoyed my job very much. I enjoyed teaching; I was teaching laboratories. My kids were still at home, and this was a very happy time of my life. And then after five years, Henry Koffler told me they were recommending me for tenure. Leonard said, "It will never happen, they don't have anybody tenured on the instructor level in the School of Science." But I got tenure, and Henry told me, "You will have to make a decision. If you take this tenured

position, you will never be promoted; if you go back to graduate school, you won't get a job." So I took the job and then had the distinction of being the first tenured instructor in the School of Science who didn't have a Ph.D.[8] Not going on turned out to be a terrible mistake.

What happened to your sense of Jewish identity when you came to Lafayette?

BERKOVITZ: We were here less than twenty-four hours, and the rabbi from the Sons of Abraham congregation called on us. He was a very warm and hospitable guy, and the congregation engulfed us with love and attention, but we have actually not joined because they are too conservative for me. This has led to a mild disagreement between my husband and me, because he is more traditional than I am, and he has been supporting them. Our older son was bar-mitzvahed with the Sons of Abraham, but our younger son did not want to be bar-mitzvahed, and we did not insist. So we gave some support to the Sons of Abraham without actually belonging. Last year, though, we did make a decision to join the Reform Temple Israel.

What kind of experience was that?

BERKOVITZ: It's an affirmation of belonging to a Jewish community.

Do the Jewish religious services and prayers mean anything to you?

BERKOVITZ: No.

Would you consider yourself an agnostic?

BERKOVITZ: Probably, probably.

What about your affiliations or activities that relate to Jewish life?

BERKOVITZ: I'm a life member of Hadassah, but I'm not very active. I have a strong cultural identification with the Jewish people, but not as far as the religious ceremonies go.

You have also been active in Hillel and participated in a good number of their Holocaust remembrance conferences.

BERKOVITZ: I did particularly in the beginning, but sometimes the memorial service gets too diluted with other activities. I do certain things because I really feel these are the right things to do.

Recently a teacher called me up from Tecumseh Middle School and asked me if I could speak to an assembly of seventh and eighth graders, kids who are ex-

actly the age I was when I was sent to Auschwitz. They did a unit on World War II, and they wanted a survivor to talk to them. These kids were completely unsophisticated, coming mostly from blue-collar neighborhoods, and they had never met a survivor, nor, indeed, any Jewish kids. I am glad that I talked to them.

I refused to prepare a speech and said I would respond to their questions. It was unbelievable. After an hour, there wasn't a kid who moved. They stayed throughout recess, asking one question after another. They wanted to know what my life was like before the Holocaust, what my school was like, everything that happened. Afterwards each kid wrote me a letter, which they probably did under duress, but it was really a fantastic collection of their reactions. I thought doing that was worthwhile because maybe the next time they hear somebody say the Holocaust never happened, they'll know better.

On the other hand, the Purdue alumni magazine wanted to write a big article about me, but I canceled the interview because I didn't see any purpose in spilling out my life to the alumni community. I didn't think it was appropriate or educational. They probably wouldn't have read it anyway.

Have you visited Israel?

BERKOVITZ: Yes, in 1969. We have cousins there, and we strongly support the state of Israel. But I think the experience did more to establish a Jewish identity in our sons than anything else.

What did you find out about your relatives who didn't survive?

BERKOVITZ: We hoped that my father would survive, but we don't know what happened to him. I assume he was not killed immediately, but I don't know. We don't know any specifics on the fate of the other members of our family either.

To what extent have you talked to your children about your experiences? Have they asked about it?

BERKOVITZ: I have taken great pains not to inflict the survivor syndrome upon my children. I have taken pains not to inflict them with my wounds. Until they grew up, they knew very little about my background. As far as their own identity is concerned, I prefer they do whatever they feel is comfortable.

What fundamental values would you extract out of your experiences?

BERKOVITZ: You can take anything out of them that you wish. But I don't know how you can really extract any good from the kind of experience I went through, because so many good, innocent, God-fearing religious people were

wiped out. The Holocaust shows the absolutely unlimited capacity of man's cruelty to man.

How did you come to resolve your feelings?

BERKOVITZ: When I look at it rationally, the experience was a very bitter one. It's a lesson in mass inhumanity not covered up by any veneer of civilization. That's the basic lesson. But what I think the question should be is, What got me through? And the number-one thing that got me through was just sheer luck. Also, while I was in the camp, I had the attitude that this was an absolute, total aberration, and that if I survived, there would be this wonderful and just world out there. This attitude of some positive goodness kept me going.

So in order to survive, you had to be somewhat naive?

BERKOVITZ: That's right. You have to believe that there is a plan, and there is a basic good, and that once you overcome this temporary aberration, there is a righteous world there, because this is not really the way humanity is.

And from where did you get this feeling?

BERKOVITZ: I don't know. I just had this feeling of ultimate justice and ultimate goodness, that here was this evil that the whole world was fighting, and that this evil would eventually be overcome. Things were more black and white to me then than they are now. Things are not so clear to me anymore.

What happened to you was clear enough.

BERKOVITZ: But not clear as to whether it was an aberration or part of general humankind, whether this is the way people really are, whether we all are capable of such absolute evil.

During your experience, your positive idealistic side prevailed, but has your faith in human goodness subsequently been shattered?

BERKOVITZ: When I think back to those times, I say to myself, that was not me, that person in the camp, because I could not have gone through that. Now I don't see how I could have done it. This life today is my second life, a completely different life. But my survival shows you some of the strength of a human being and what can be endured.

If part of the reason for your getting through lay in a certain faith in a better world, how did a more traditional religious faith affect people's survival?

BERKOVITZ: I'm sure that a deep religious faith gave people a certain amount of strength. My mother and I didn't have it. The fact that we were being punished because we were Jewish made us more proud to be Jewish, so that if somebody had put a gun to our heads and said, "Deny your faith or die," we probably would have chosen death. This was our identity, and we were proud of that identity. But Auschwitz made us question the existence of God. How could a god let this thing go on?

Did you find that with certain people those experiences strengthened their religious faith?

BERKOVITZ: This question came up in a recent conversation I had with somebody who said to me, "You know, even under your terrible circumstances, there was a proof of God. While you were suffering, God showed his hand in the D-Day invasion. Had that not succeeded, the war would have lasted much longer and more millions of Jews would have perished."

Had the war lasted two or three months longer, both my mother and I would probably have been dead along with many more who managed to survive the camps. So in that sense you could say that it was God's will that the Normandy invasion succeeded. However, carrying this argument to its logical end, you would have to ask why God waited until six million Jews had been murdered before performing this miracle. Why didn't God make a miracle earlier?

On a personal level, though, you might say there is a god because that god was looking out for me.

And this has made you less religious?

BERKOVITZ: Less religiously Jewish while affirming my Jewish identity.

Did you ever go back to the place where you were born?

BERKOVITZ: No.

Do you have any desire to do that?

BERKOVITZ: No, I don't think I will ever go back.

But you've been back to Europe?

BERKOVITZ: I've been back to Europe, and I went as far as Budapest.

Have you ever been back to Germany?

BERKOVITZ: That was a very interesting experience. While we were on sabbatical in London in 1984, I decided that I wanted to go back to Hungary, to Budapest. And we agonized whether we should drive or fly, but we decided to drive, and of course, we had to drive through Germany. It was very difficult for me to set foot on German soil, so we pored over maps to see how we could go through Germany as quickly as possible. We spent the night right at the French border and planned to drive as fast as possible to Austria and then on to Hungary. But nevertheless, we had to spend at least one night in Germany. I was extremely, extremely upset. And then I had a very interesting emotional experience.

It was late May, early June. The same time of year when I had been taken in a cattle car from Hungary to Auschwitz forty years earlier. We had gone through Slovakia into Poland, through the high country. And I remember standing on a box looking through a little window at the beautiful scenery as we were passing through the High Tatras, seeing the pine woods and the spring flowers, and I thought how beautiful the world was with its blue skies and gorgeous mountains. And I was going to who knows where? I didn't know about Auschwitz, but I knew where we were going wasn't inviting.

Then, forty years later, almost to the day, again at the end of May, I was going through Germany in a car with my husband, going through beautiful scenery. Under very different circumstances. We were driving to Austria on the autobahn and the scenery was absolutely gorgeous, blue skies and pine trees on both sides, and I recalled this cattle car going to Auschwitz. I was very emotionally tense.

But I was fiddling around with the radio, and as we crossed a bridge I suddenly heard a prayer in Hebrew. Leonard said it was a prayer for the dead, a Kaddish, and it was being recited over a German station. And both Leonard and I started to cry, and I said, "Forty years ago I was going in a cattle car from Hungary to Auschwitz, and I was looking out that little window and seeing this beautiful scenery and the blue skies, and forty years later, I am going in Germany as a free person in a car with you, going over this bridge with the beautiful pine trees and the blue sky, and I'm a free person, and over a German radio station comes the Kaddish. If there is a miracle, this is a miracle. And maybe there is a God, after all."

And we both continued to cry, and after that, I felt better. I felt better, even though I was in Germany. I have had very few spiritual or religious experiences in my life, because as you can see, I'm not a religious person, but this I consider a religious experience. It was like a catharsis, and after that, I felt more comfortable being in that country, which had been the source of so much of my suffering.

When we got to Austria, we ended up staying in a castle that had become a bed and breakfast. The proprietress, the Countess von Augsburg herself, served breakfast. The countess's grandfather had once been a minister in the government of Emperor Francis Joseph. She did not know that she was serving the granddaughter of a Jewish coal merchant who had once been one of his subjects.

Security Is a Matter of Percentages: Robert Melson

"My God, what a crazy thing to have gone through and also, what a crazy thing to have asked a kid to go through."

A New Identity

After the end of the war, the Melsons moved to Brussels, where they lived for the next two years. It was there that Melson found out he was Jewish.

ROBERT MELSON: A day or two after we arrived in Brussels, I went with my parents to a club called the Shalom, a gathering place for fellow refugees and other displaced persons. My father started speaking Yiddish to the waiter, and my mother started to cry. And they're both embracing this waiter, and there are Yiddish songs being sung. They became part of this network, part of what we would today call a "support group." I felt tied to that. It felt Jewish to me. The other thing that was Jewish to me came from the stories my parents started telling me about what happened during the war. I was very close to my mother, and especially through her, through her sense of grief, I got this sense of Jewishness, although I really didn't know what being Jewish meant. I knew my parents were connected to this group of people who had survived the war and a lot of our family had been killed. That's it, I thought, that's what it means to be Jewish.

Melson's father, unable to obtain a regular work permit, engaged in black market operations. He did so well that he was able to send his son to Le Rosay, a fashionable boarding school in Switzerland. He was enrolled there under the old identity of Zamoyski.

You found out that you were Jewish, but then your father told you to pretend that you were non-Jewish. How did you feel about that?

Epilogue

Individual experience is the brick and mortar of history. Every human being forms part of an overall structure that contains the meaning and importance of an age. Thus, both the particular and the general are material for reflection, interpretation, and analysis. However, because people constantly change, modern historical interpretation tends to prefer the great movements rather than individual lives which are the essence of history, unless those lives are the lives of the rich and famous.

Academics like predictability. They search for meaning and value in the things they can understand and discover. This proved particularly true for the survivors in this book when it came to examining their own lives and trying to sort out the relevance of their earlier experiences with Nazi persecution.

Order is a necessary part of explanation. Putting human behavior in an understandable framework—whether political, psychological, social, or moral—helps shape peoples' comprehension. This is certainly true in Holocaust studies, where there is a propensity to make distinctions among perpetrators, bystanders, rescuers, and victims. But all of these come in many colors. Perpetrators, for example, can be divided into categories of those who took pleasure in butchering people, those who became instruments of such action, those who acted to advance their careers, and those who acted out of ideological commitment. These distinctions are by no means exhaustive and by no means mutually exclusive.

Rescuers also come in many forms. There are those who truly risk their

lives to help other people and those who merely look the other way or decline to report a critical piece of information to the authorities. The truly righteous Gentiles act out of a genuine willingness to give assistance without doing a cost/benefit analysis. Ironically, though, the most trivial, random act of kindness might make all the difference in the cruel game of survival—at least this proved to be the case for the survivors in this book. A good turn from a stranger, no matter how casual, could prove crucial.

Survival was clearly not something that could be learned from books. It was not something that prayer could guarantee. It was "on-the-job" training, with often uncertain consequences. If it became a matter of faith, then faith in the God of Luck was often more important than faith in a Lord of Creation.

All the academics in this oral history were persecuted for their connection to the Jewish faith, a connection that Nazi bigotry translated into a malignant theory of racial inferiority. Yet none had come from a particularly strong religious environment. Their families had been mildly to strongly assimilationist, both in orientation and practice. Most had been exposed to traditional religious practices, such as attendance at a seder, visits to a synagogue, and religious instruction; but this exposure did not leave an indelible imprint on their lives. The Jewish bourgeoisie of which they were a part had been profoundly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, which attenuated their Jewishness in favor of so-called secular values and practices.

Their lives followed the general pattern of such assimilation, which was well advanced in continental Europe, especially in Germany, France, and Austria, as well as in certain communities in Eastern Europe. Gone almost entirely were those customs and routines that traditionally made Jews stand out from their non-Jewish neighbors and that now had become obstructive to success in modern society, or were at least perceived as such. The survivors in this history had given little special consideration to their Jewishness before the Nazis made them aware of it. Neither did the trauma of Nazi persecution translate into a strong religious identity. (On the other hand, a large survivor literature from Hasidic Jews shows that those with a strong religious identity emerged from their ordeal with their faith intact, although perhaps battered.)

Indeed, assimilation enhanced the chance of escape. Had those in this book been part of a strong traditional community, they might not have felt so vulnerable and made plans to escape; instead, they might have been disposed to hunker down and weather the storm, as people had done in past pogroms.

Ultimately, however, no matter what the state of assimilation, or the extent

to which people abandoned the faith of their forbears, Nazi persecution made it impossible for those persecuted not to consider their Jewish heritage for the rest of their lives. If the religious aspect was not heightened, at least the cultural aspect was. At the same time, though, their direct experience with Nazi racial politics often heightened their suspicion of any kind of strongly held beliefs.

Great trauma often heightens a need for transcendence. For those in this book this did not come from any single experience but rather was a continuous process occurring in various stages and at various times, even, to some extent, achieved through their university careers. It came through a belief in humanitarian values that found new expression in their private and professional lives. It came in their careers of study, teaching, and writing, through the satisfaction that they were helping to enrich the world of their adopted country, community, and university. Rather than feeling victimized, these survivors retained the feelings for compassion and good works which had been part of their common Jewish cultural identity. Having seen the ability of government to do harm, they believed that it should be used to serve the people, not become their master.

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Some carried their past with them. Others discarded it. Some found out what happened to their families and homes. Others could only speculate. Some traveled back to their homelands. Others refused to set foot there again.

Alarming and provocative, these twelve stories illustrate the will to survive in a sea of uncertainty. The twelve faced their bitter prerequisite and overcame the odds to find new homes and new lives and create successful careers.

Wm. Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt holds a doctorate from the University of Geneva, where he attended the Graduate Institute of International Studies. He has written a number of books, including *The Burden of Victory: France, Britain and the Enforcement of the Versailles Peace, 1919–1925* and *Europe since 1945: From Conflict to Community.* A chevalier in the Order of the Palmes Académiques, he lives with his spouse, Sheila, in Oak Park, Illinois, together with their presupposing cat, Oliver.

Jacket design by David Black

"[I]t's as if the reader is privy to twelve diaries that are the secret, sometimes humorous, and certainly painful stories of survival despite incredible odds.—*ForeWord*

"We were respected members of the community. All the men of the family of my father's generation had served as German soldiers in the First World War. My father was wounded and decorated, and his brother was killed in November 1914 on the Russian front at the age of seventeen. No one felt more German than we did, and few had sacrificed more on the altar of patriotism than our family."—Fritz Cohen, professor of German literature

"Our reception at Auschwitz was an absolute insane asylum, an absolute madhouse. Dogs barking, people screaming, Germans shouting, people shoving. It was complete pandemonium. The only things that we understood were the orders for the men to go in one line and the women in the other. My father looked at me and at my mother. She was wearing a black kerchief around her head, and my father ripped off the kerchief and told her to put it around my head. And that's the last time I ever saw my father. I had two long braids, and I put the kerchief over them, and the Germans never asked me how old I was."—Anna Berkovitz, biologist

"Throughout my life, I have always been amazed at the enormous capacity of people to recuperate from great injury, and the enormous potential that people have to realize their better self, their ability to live full rich lives in decent relationships with others."—Joseph Haberer, political scientist

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